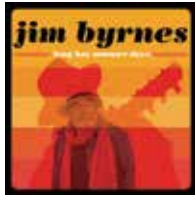


Blues you can use...



Jim Byrnes
Long Hot Summer Days
 (Black Hen Music)

St Louis-born Jim Byrnes is a true Thespian, blessed with a soothing baritone and the dramatic skills that would allow him to sing the phone book to high praise. His acting career has included featured roles on TV programs like *Wiseguy*, *Highlander* and *X-Men* and Jim's musical awards include three Junos, one Maple Leaf and a Canadian Folk Music Award. For his 2017 CD, *Long Hot Summer Days*, Jim teamed up with long-time musical partner, acclaimed guitarist and producer Steve Dawson, on 12 outstanding tracks of blues, roots and soul. Byrnes and Dawson are authentic stylists who reinvent familiar tunes, breathing life into old chestnuts with new arrangements and great performances from the ensemble they convened at The Warehouse Studio in Vancouver B.C. Byrnes throws himself into the emotional center of each track and is bolstered by the fabulous back up gospel trio The Sojourners, who are to him what the Jordanaires were to Elvis. Dawson's gritty slide guitar cracks open the door on the opening Gospel-infused track "Step By Step," written by the late Jesse Winchester. The heavily-covered classic from The Band, "The Shape I'm in," is ratcheted down 40 bpm with drummer Geoff Hicks and bassist Jeremy Holmes delivering a deep blues shuffle that emphasizes the melancholy. The stirring choral intro to Bobby "Blue" Bland's "Ain't No Love in The Heart of the City" signals a theatrical and new reading of the soul standard. Byrnes shows he can stick to the script for an authentic version of "There is Something On Your Mind," a swinging horn-driven blues that was a hit for Bobby Marchan in 1960. Byrnes then plays the role of fire and brimstone preacher delivering his sermon "Everybody Knows," with Leonard Cohen's prescient lyrics ringing true in these troubled times. The first of three originals, the blue-eyed soul of "Deep Blue Sea," is followed by the mysterious recording of Willie Dixon's "Weak Brain, Narrow Mind." Some greasy B3 organ and

moaning baritone sax highlight the cover of "99 ½ (Won't Do)." and Byrnes trades barbs with MonkeyJunk's harmonica master Steve Marriner on the aching slow blues of Elmore James' "Something Inside of Me." Dawson then leads the ensemble by picking on a National steel guitar for the country blues "Anywhere The Wind Blows," and Jim and the Sojourners take us to church on a long-time Percy Sledge staple, "Out of Left Field." The seductive title track closes the CD with a romantic recollection of simpler times, love and better days long since passed.

Rick J Bowen



Peter Parcek
Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven
 (Lightnin' Records)

Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven is the long awaited follow-up to Parcek's Blues Music Award Best New Artist Debut nominated *Mathematics of Love*. The 10 selections include six originals by Peter and the balance select covers. *Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven* was produced by Marco Giovino who also play drums and percussion on the project. Marco assembled a choice batch of Nashville session players and special guests including Luther Dickinson (North Mississippi All-Stars) and famed Muscle Shoals keyboardist Spooner Oldham. Parcek opens with a stout take on Peter Green's "World Keeps On Turning" from 1967. This is followed by an ethereal take on Blind Lemon Jefferson's "See that My Grave is Kept Clean." The first original is "Pat Hare" ground breaking guitarist for Junior Parker, James Cotton, Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters. "Ashes to Ashes" features bristling slide over a ponding rhythm and the up-beat sounds of the instrumental "Shiver" (a favorite track) are sure to get the dancers up. A couple of stand-out cuts are "Every Drop of Rain" a compelling song with economic guitar lines and the title track a Don Nix song original laid down by Albert King with a completely original arrangement with ringing guitar and expressive vocals. Highly recommended.

Malcolm Kennedy



Curtis/Sutton & The Scavengers
Whiskey Rain
 (Self-Released)

The Boise, Idaho-based Curtis/Sutton & The Scavengers use traditional acoustic instruments of banjo, string bass, dobro, fiddle and guitar in a very nontraditional way to create a neo folk, modern Aire sound they describe as "Country folk meets swamp blues." Their second album, *Whiskey Rain*, released in August of 2017 echoes that sound in 12 original tracks of fresh-faced, roots-infused musical inspiration. The Scavengers have is a revolving cast of characters led by songwriters Charlie Sutton and Ryan Curtis, who trade off lead vocals from song to song, and anchored by their only full-timers, Sam Alkire on upright bass and Adam Straubinger on fiddle. A lonesome moan from that fiddle opens the album then gives way to the countrified emo ramble of "Bacon and Beans," then downshifts for the eerie blues of "Want It to Work," featuring some gritty vocals from Curtis and some spooky slide guitar. Sutton then leads on vocals and banjo for the energetic twist on a traditional tale of murder and hard times "No Good Son." The title track takes us back to the pioneer days of the Old West, then the contemplative country song "California Man" spells out the troubles of modern times. The clever lyrics of "Monster Pick Up" illustrates a troubled romance through a truck driving allegory. Sutton delivers fiery banjo picking on the rocking "Talk a Little Less" and the minor key dirge, "Meadow Lark," has a very Northwest grunge rock gone acoustic aesthetic. Curtis and Sutton are gifted songwriters who have taken cues from Leonard Cohen and Johnny Cash and fearlessly mix the old with the new in creative and surprising ways.

Rick J Bowen