

Seamus Kennedy - A Smile And A Tear



There are two types of folk singer (actually, there are lots of types, but indulge us for a moment), those who approach singing as an art form and those who sing to entertain. Some of those whose primary approach is the former may also be highly entertaining; some of those whose approach is primarily that of the entertainer may also be consummate artists.

Pay The Reckoning's verdict after listening to **A Smile And A Tear** (Gransha Records SK-0010) - Belfast-born, now resident in America, Kennedy's umpteenth album - is that he falls into the entertainer camp, yet approaches his material with the sensitivities of an artist.

The breadth of Kennedy's sweep is the first aspect which struck Pay The Reckoning as we settled down to hear the album through. There are traditional tunes and songs and newly-penned; songs from Ireland, Scotland and America. The title hints at Kennedy's ability to deliver sad and comic songs equally well. It does not however, account for Kennedy's unusual ability to dovetail the two into one coherent body of music.

You'll be familiar with some of the material on this album - the opener, for example, *Mairi's Wedding/The Flowers of Edinburgh*. You'll be less familiar with Kennedy's delivery - a joyous, upbeat and yet subtle romp through two perennials. Likewise you may be familiar with *Grace, Song For Ireland* and *The Dutchman* - here given Kennedy's rich, mellow treatment.

You'll be tickled by some of the less familiar material. Kennedy's own Boogie Woogie Piper, for example, which gives E.J. Jones of Clandestine - a Celtic outfit from Houston, Texas - an opportunity to strut his funky piping over a country boogie number. The two shouldn't work? Theoretically, you'd be right. But Kennedy's not afraid to take a gamble and this one pays off big time! Folk and country radio DJs - take a tip; slip this into your schedules and challenge your audience's preconceptions...

Jed Marum's *Sweet Ellen Joyce*, Stan Rogers' *Barrett's Privateers* and John A. Carroll's *The Chemist's Drinking Song* are a few of the other tracks worthy of being singled out for special mention. Although (and this is the reviewer's last refuge!) on an album of this quality, singling out one or two tracks is not only difficult, it serves no real purpose. The true test of this album's calibre is to get your hands on a copy, pour up a pint (or several - there are 17 tracks!) of beer and relax and let Kennedy bring forth a smile and a tear!

To order this album or any of Kennedy's other albums, go to www.cdbaby.com
Tell them Pay The Reckoning sent you!

Aidan Crossey
Pay The Reckoning
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