

Mp3 Pat Orchard - Clearwater Days

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Gentle Melancholic Acoustic Songs. Very Emotive. 9 MP3 Songs FOLK: Modern Folk, POP: Delicate Details: Wayward spirit Pat Orchard is evolving into a real one-off. This latest outing 'Clearwater Days' is available. Anyone who appreciates finely crafted songs played and sung with the kind of delicacy and honesty we've rarely heard since the first wave of singer-songwriters in the early 1970s should be reaching for pen and paper now. There's a hint of Waterboy Mike Scott about some of the material, an echo of the very early Van Morrison, a suggestion of Colin Blunstone maybe, but these things are not the essence of Orchard. He's at his best with a simple song sung with conviction, supported by his own acoustic picking, and embellished with a touch of cello or a wash of synthesiser colour. Hopelessly out of his time, this man should be cherished as one of the few true spirits still abroad in this land. PAT ORCHARD, fresh from supporting Johnny Cash at the Royal Albert Hall and Rage Against the Machine in Europe presents 'Clearwater Days', an album that sees him returning to his acoustic roots. Gently reflective and imaginative acoustic canvasses are given authority by Orchard's melodic intricacies and understanding of the medium, coming to delightful fruition on the absolutely magnificent title track. Not every thing succeeds, but with an artist as clever and individualistic as Orchard, you wouldn't expect it, his special muse offering individual delights to each listener. Available only as a limited numbered pressing 'Clearwater Days' could easily end up as something of a cult classic. Long overdue new album from one of England's premier acoustic guitarists and singer/songwriters, a collection which fits seamlessly in amongst his already enviable back-catalogue. Despite the gentle, acoustic nature of 'Clearwater Days' it should in no way be seen as a contractual obligation. Pat Orchard has no contract anyway, his elegant muse is beholden to no-one but himself and the angels and demons that haunt him. All nine songs on 'Clearwater Days' share that same disturbingly honest quality that the best of all the melancholy minstrels seem able to tap into with idiosyncratic ease, even the upbeat title song which evokes the English romantic vision of nostalgia with spellbinding lyrical nuances. The confessional intensity of 'When We Were Young', the sardonic asides woven amongst the baroquely sprawling echoes of 'Family Tree', the sad-eyed crazy magic of 'Sorry Man', the sensitive insights of 'The Ark' and 'When The Night', right through

to the closing birdsong which was included so you can wake up in the small hours thinking it's the dawn chorus; all this is pure Pat Orchard, beautifully arranged with his incantatory voice and incandescent guitar picking out moments of visionary mayhem that evoke the fragile joys of an all-consuming love affair and the inevitable sadnesses which follow. Simply brilliant. When September rolled around in the Russet grove at Nutbourne fruit farm, you would find me frantically reading underneath an upturned apple bin in the pissing rain. At the end of one summer I read *Frankenstein*, the next year it was *The Day of the Triffids*, then *Animal Farm*. I rushed them rather because I knew Mr. Bryant was bound to ask me what I'd read. The last year I was there my life was eclipsed by Vanessa, who had incredible red hair and was at least five years too old for me. Feverish with unrequited angst I devoured *The Catcher in the Rye*. That was the beginning of the end for me. Anyway, the reason I'm telling you all this is that by some powerful mnemonics, the subject matter of *Clearwater Days* has suffused me with a melancholic evocation of all that. I'm not much given to reminiscence, so this is indeed strange alchemy. Opening shot *When We Were Young* rocks a gentle lullaby like Tom Robinson doing *Jackanory* from Devon. *Strings* (by Tony Lowe) sweep inland in particularly lush and unpredictable sequence. *Sorry Man* would sit uncomfortably close to *Streets Of London* in the lyrical canon were it not for the touchingly simple and honest setting. Nick Drake's *Parasite* springs to mind, actually he springs to mind a lot of the time. The title track is embellished with a run of quirky pastorals along the lines of: "All it took to turn us on was to skive off school and do something wrong". It bounds along with youthful abandon, even if the programmed horns do jar somewhat. *Family Tree* is awash with vintage John Martyn style reverberant guitars and tantalisingly genealogical subject matter (Let me through, I'm a specialist). *The Ark* is effortlessly elegant and cyclical, uncomplicated John Cale. *Rise* has a touch of acoustic Robyn Hitchcock to it, and a rather too understated nonetheless captivating psychedelic middle section. *When The Night* fizzles with dazzling arpeggio like Bert Jansch and (this isn't intended to put anyone off) a profoundly Donovan-like melody and tone of voice. *Scared To Be Alone* is as ever uncompromisingly genuine but also unexpectedly desperate, the inconsolable essential of this set. *For All And None* abates the misery only a fraction, landing our Ray Davies-esque narrator alone, cold and wet in the early morning bemoaning: "Just me and Nelson again." Right there in Trafalgar Square he abandons but for a Messianic trill of birdsong to cheer us up some. Pat Orchard is incorporated as *Sad Tiger Music* (aah!), and this limited edition of 1000 was presumably fashioned at his own expense. Snatch yours up while you can. This CD release from

singer/songwriter Pat Orchard is the perfect antidote to the overdriven angst that occupies a good portion of the current grunge rock circus. Here we have songs, quietly sung for the most part against a backdrop of acoustic guitar, with occasional keyboards, piano and cello, providing moods and atmospheres. The voice sometimes reminds me of Nick Drake whilst the final track, 'For All And None' has slight echoes of Donovan - something in the combination of voice and arrangement. 'When We Were Young' is a mellow opener, the lyrics reflecting upon the passage of idyllic days spent at a coastal location. 'Sorry Man' is a beautifully delivered story about Ruby, a down-and-out who smiles through her misfortune and "puts this sorry man to shame" the title track is a more upbeat song musically and lyrical it occupies the same territory as the opening number. We then move into the wonderfully atmospheric 'Family Tree', just voice and what sounds like a guitar fed through an echo pedal (reminiscent of John Martyn's work on One World), and onto 'The Ark' with its guitar and piano arrangement perfectly set against a dreamy vocal. 'Rise' has a fuller production, and like the title track - though not as immediate, has grown upon me after repeated listens. The reflective tone and nature of 'When The Night' returns us to the earlier themes, memories and daydreams, whilst 'Scared To Be Alone' is a stark vocal and solo observation on loneliness. I wonder how many barflies would flinch at the recognition on hearing this song? 'For All And None' closes the album with observations from the perspective of the street musician. How many London commuters have passed this music by? Overall the impression this CD gives is of quiet understatement. It is a pleasure to be confronted with a CD where the music invites you in and the terms 'singer-songwriter/guitarist' are in balance. No guitar showing-off here, just excellent playing treating the songs with respect. No this isn't rock, nor is it folk. This is music that inhabits the territory we know as 'singer/songwriter' in this case with integrity and intimacy intact. By the way, see this man live when his guitar playing is well to the fore.

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