

The Pilgrim: A Celebration of Kris Kristofferson **American Roots Publishing**

Kris Kristofferson. Depending on your age and interests his name can conjure up radically different images. For contemporary action movie buffs Kristofferson was the old guy in *Blade*. Longtime movie buffs will remember Kristofferson as Barbara Streisand's romantic interest in *A Star is Born* or as the hero in Michael Cimino's commercial disaster *Heaven's Gate*. Rock fans with a mind for trivia will know that Kristofferson penned Janis Joplin's biggest hit "Me and Bobby McGee." Country music fans will remember that Kristofferson was at the forefront of the '70's outlaw country movement. In short, there isn't just one perspective on Kris Kristofferson that can encompass the entire breadth of his artistic output.

On *The Pilgrim - A Celebration of Kris Kristofferson* executive producers Tamara Saviano and Tom Frouge look at Kris Kristofferson the songwriter. They enlisted a wide assortment of recording artists to cover seventeen Kristofferson tunes. Performers include Emmylou Harris, Sam Bush, Todd Snider, Marta Gomez, Rosanne Cash, Rodney Crowell, Lloyd Cole, Jill Sobule, Marshall Chapman, Shooter Jennings, Gretchen Wilson, Patty Griffin, Russell Crowe, Brian McKnight, Jessi Colter, Bruce Robison, Kelly Willis, Shawn Camp, and Willie Nelson. Material goes from the obvious such as "Me and Bobby McGee," "Jesus Was a Capricorn," and "Sunday Morning Coming Down," to more obscure selections including "Smile at Me Again," "Why Me," and "Darby's Castle." Given the breadth of material and performers the album has a surprising consistency despite the radical differences in musical perspectives and styles. My personal favorite is "Maybe You've Heard" by Todd Snider, followed by Brian McKnight's surprising rendition of "Me and Bobby McGee." Given Kristofferson's history of less than totally successful marriages and longtime association with Johnny Cash, having Cash's daughter Rosanne's contribution right next to the song done by her ex-husband Rodney Crowell seems like more than merely a musical programming decision.

With nine different studios and fourteen different recording engineers, making giving the anthology some semblance of sonic integration must have been a daunting task. Producer Randy Scruggs and mastering engineer Dave Sinko (listed as "our hero" in the liner notes) managed to preserve each studio and engineer's unique sound while making the transitions from one to another go smoothly. Best sound honors are a dead heat between Jon Leventhal's recording of Rosanne Cash and Buddy Miller's engineering of Gretchen Wilson's "Sunday Morning Coming Down."

Peter Cooper's insightful and extensive sixteen pages of liner notes coupled with photographs from Jim Marshall, Matt Gunther, The Grand Ole Opry Archives, Country Hall of Fame Museum, and Mary Ellen Mark make the visual component of this release as impressive as its music. The second of American Roots Publishing's "The New Great American Songbook

Series,” *The Pilgrim* matches their first release, *Beautiful Dreamer: The Songs of Stephen Foster* in ambition, scope, and the successful realization of their lofty artistic goals.

--Steven Stone