



Rick Shea & the Losin' End - 'The Town Where I Live' 27 February 2018

One of the great things about art (books, films, photographs, albums) is that it can take you to new places. I mean that in the literal sense. With his album 'The Town Where I Live' Rick Shea takes us to small town Americana - places where there is no work, not much to be hopeful about, where people drink and fight and others dream of escaping. With these songs we get a glimpse into the lives of the characters who live there.

Rick Shea grew up in San Bernardino, an old railway town East of Los Angeles, which back then still had honky-tonks and truck stop bars where country music was played. Rick Shea's voice is somewhat reminiscent of Tom Russell. The songs are unhurried, often repeating choruses many times and with instrumental outro's when the main message has already been conveyed. This is straightforward country, with a hint of pub rock. The album is recorded with Rick Shea's regular backing band. There are a few embellishments – a pedal steel here, an organ there – but mostly it is fairly unadorned, and all the better for it.

'The Starkville Blues' describes one of those no hope towns: *"If you go down to Starkville you'd better learn to sing the blues. The people there in Starkville, all they get is just bad news"*.

Escaping is a recurrent theme on the album, but even that is viewed with resignation in the title track 'The Town Where I Live': *"I might catch a ride or I might jump a train But I'd just be some place where it'd all look the same"*.

Resignation returns in 'Guess Things Happen That Way', which has an almost galloping beat but is ultimately a very sad song from the point of view of a man who has lost his partner in life.

'The Angel Mary And The Rounder Jim' is a more uplifting tale about an unlikely couple. A rounder apparently is a criminal or a disreputable person, however Mary and Jim hit it off, hit the road and make music together. There is a hint that it does not end well, but at least this is not spelled out. This and 'The Road To Jericho' are my favourites on this album.

I browsed Rick Shea's back catalogue and came across a Waterboys cover ('Fisherman's Blues'). His albums are on iTunes and available through his own website.

Later this year Rick Shea will be part of one of those amazing-sounding Roots On The Rails journeys, alongside amongst others Dave Alvin. Details are [HERE](#)

Helen
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