

Reviews of "A Word Child"

FOLK AND MUSIC EXCHANGE (FAME)

BOB GOTTLIEB 5/1/13

When you hit the play button on ***A Word Child*** by Susan Kane there is a bit of a snaky guitar lead into her warm, enveloping voice for the song, *Around The Bend*, one of the seven songs she wrote for this disc. There are two songs written by the Robert Hunter & Jerry Garcia; and one each by Stephen Ray Kirkman and Rich Deans, and then B. Gregory Palitz composed the music for *Donal Og* which is a poem written by Lady Gregory. The songs have a cohesive feel to them and range from warm folk, to bluesy in feel to twangy, to haunting, all within that mode that is called Americana. Ms. Kane is a skilled songwriter and her songs remind the listener that there are writers who present their thoughts in a cohesive linear manner, so that the listener doesn't have to search for hidden meanings, a pleasant reprieve from some of the writers who use seven veils for their words and then there are all these subtexts.

This disc was recorded mostly in Austin, Texas, and a few cuts at Woody's House in Croton, NY, and here and there. As with many albums that are recorded in multiple locations there are a plethora of musicians playing on here. The main constant is Billy Masters who handles the guitars and also produced the disc. The musicians are all top notch and there is no drop off no matter who was playing on a particular song with Ms. Kane. It is a disc that lives up to its name and I venture to guess that she is a woman that appreciates the correct word at the right time by the craftsmanship of the songs.

NO DEPRESSION/ EASY ED

3/19/13

From a No Depression Blog

Had I'd known of this artist and the album titled *A Word Child* that was released last November, it likely would have made my annual list of favorites. It's not only that good, but far better than that. When something new comes my way, sometimes I'm taken by the songs, sometimes it's the instrumentation, sometimes the vocals and always the vibe. Susan Kane has delivered on all fronts, far exceeding the expectations I had when she chose to reach out to me last week. We're sort of neighbors in this Lower Hudson Valley I've recently moved to, a land rich in musical tradition and especially fertile for folksingers and acoustic players.

Susan is a member and past president of the Tribes Hill music collective, a group that includes several artists I had already heard of (Anthony da Costa, Abbie Gardner and Red Molly) and many, many more I'm now discovering. There's a compilation called *We're All Here* on CD Baby that showcases some of the members. This non-profit organization is "uniting musician(s) of the Lower Hudson Valley region and their patrons, in support of a music community that aspires to common goals and beliefs. It is a conceptual gathering place for people of all races, politics, and faiths coming together to explore and celebrate the human experience through song." Some of the group's goals include creating public showcases, bringing music to schools, encouraging regional radio programs and "promoting the music of our independent artists through the support of patrons and the many resources of Lower Hudson Valley, as well as beyond."

The first thing that caught my attention when Susan sent me the files for her latest album (she has also released two others: *Highway Bouquet* and *So Long*), was that she covered two songs I knew well... "Loser" from the first Jerry Garcia solo album, and "Row, Jimmy" off The Dead's *Wake Of The Flood*. "Jerry and Robert [Hunter] are deep in my DNA" she wrote, and as I've curled up with the rest of the album over these past few days, I've found myself feeling the spirit of the Dead surface and intertwine with her own songs. But the music goes far, far beyond just that touchpoint.

Susan's voice is a beautiful instrument; both solid and soaring. When she lets the high notes fly, it feels like frost being thrown through the fresh night air. Her lyrics are sophisticated and intelligent, which I would imagine they must be with the album's title being what it is. The songs are layered with seasoned and tasteful instrumentation and production values. Recorded primarily in Austin, Texas, the musicians include bass player Zev Katz, pedal steel artist Bob Hoffnar, percussionist Ben Wittman, vocals from Jess Klein, bass player Glenn Fukunaga, drummer Marco Giovino from

the Robert Plant Band, and others. It was produced by Billy Masters who she has worked with before.

Those of you who have been reading my posts these past four years, have heard time and again how much I dislike doing reviews, yet here I am once more. I tried to engage Susan to share some things, but she replied that "focusing on the music is fine with me...my personal story is very boring, I am happy to say." Well...Susan, I believe that your story is pretty interesting. It took me a little while to find it on her website, but I'll share with you what I found:

-She grew up in Waldwick, N.J., near the Paramus Mall. Her mother taught piano and her father was an aspiring actor who finally packed it in to sell insurance. When the Beatles hit America Kane asked for a guitar, and by the time she was in 7th grade she was leading her own folk music trio.

-Studied economics at Bryn Mawr College and kept up her songwriting on the side, graduating in 1975. After a stint at the European American Bank in Manhattan she moved over to the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, teaching brokers and bankers in the Credit Training Program for several years before marrying and staying at home to raise three children. Not that she transformed herself into a soccer mom...she kept doing the corporate stuff on a project basis, and has been a "hands on" finance person in a bunch of nonprofits for years, including deep involvement in prison education programs.

-As her kids got older Susan started to feel the itch of performing music again. She helped start a Dead cover band, August West in 1998, and then worked in another outfit, Bad Dog, that featured some of her original songs. Coaxed into the singer-songwriter genre by her friend Sloan Wainwright, she has been a regular at Tribes Hill and the open mic scene.

Susan found me by reading a recent post I wrote about seeing Mary Gauthier, a show she attended as well. Mary is an artist who began her career at age fifty, and she's someone that has inspired Susan's latest journey. "You do what you do," she said, "and don't look back if you can help it. I don't view my corporate life as a sidetrack I shouldn't have been on. For now, it's great to be doing something new and challenging. I have a lifetime to draw on for my songwriting, and I'm making the kind of music where you don't need a stylist to find an audience."

I've sprinkled her songs throughout this piece, and I hope you take the time to explore more of her work. Her ReverbNation site offers quite a bit to stream. You can buy her albums on CD Baby, Amazon, iTunes and through her own site.

What you don't want to do? You don't want to miss the music of Susan Kane....she's a very gifted artist.

PAUL KERR 3/16/13

[Blabber 'n' Smoke](#)

A Glasgow view of Americana and related music and writings.

Wanting some sultry southern slide driven gumbo to start your weekend with? Look no further as the opening song, *Around The Bend* on **Susan Kane's** excellent album **A Word Child** should satisfy anyone reared on Little Feat and early Bonnie Raitt. Sliding into view with Billy Masters' superb guitar slink buttressed by Mark Addison's soulful organ *Around The Bend* grabs the attention even before Kane starts singing. And when she does the contract is signed, sealed and delivered with her voice strong, and effortless, an equal to Raitt back in the seventies. Add some fine harmonies from the ever excellent Jess Klein and you have the best opening song of the year so far.

Kane is a NY based singer who's recorded this, her third album, in Austin, Texas and it's certainly far removed from the cosmopolitan hustle and bustle. Instead we have the aforementioned southern blues style along with some sweet country best exemplified by the fiddle laced *Buffalo Jump*. Aside from her voice Kane is a fine writer with *Buffalo Jump's* jauntiness for example offset by the lyrics which appear to be a valedictory from an elderly woman preparing for her end. Elsewhere she uses a classic country sound to bemoan the life of a woman who considers

herself invisible in the shadow of her partner on the heart tugging *I Know About Your Broken Heart* while *Paulita's Lament* is a great narrative on the life, crimes and death of Billy The Kid as seen by his lover. Kane sounds great on all of these however she turns in her best performance on *Aquamarine*, a homage to a friend which flows as sweetly as a mountain stream. Here as elsewhere the playing is excellent with Masters (who also produced the album) dripping some magical notes from his guitar.

There are four cover versions. A fine twangy rendition of Stephen Ray Kirkman's *Black Roses* which is energetic and engaging while an adaptation of Irish poet, Lady Augusta Persse, Lady Gregory, founder of the Abbey Theatre's *Donal Og* takes Kane into Richard Thompson territory temporarily. Again Masters' guitar is, well, masterful. Intriguingly the other two covers are both penned by the late Jerry Garcia in partnership with Robert Hunter. The classic gambler's tale *Loser* is given a fine reading while the more obscure *Row Jimmy* (from the Dead's *Wake of the Flood* album) returns to the opening song's organ and slide guitar groove and slides down as easily as honey.

LE CRI DU COYOTE

SAM PIERRE 4/23/13

This lady's background (a career in banking while raising several children) might never lead you to believe that she was destined to record albums. Nothing you could foresee except a wonderful desire to compose and to sing. In fact, she was always in the midst of music practicing piano and playing in different groups in her youth. And then in the late nineties, as a member of a rock group playing original material, she tells herself that perhaps she too can write songs. Then, on the advice of Sloan Wainwright she directs herself toward folk. Good choice, as proven by her first two albums and confirmed by *A Word Child*. Because the talent was there, and with her varied musical experience, she has a palette that enables her not to be confined to a single genre. From the bluesy *Around the Bend* (with backup vocals by Jess Klein) to *New York Winter*, a mid tempo homage to her city, Susan paints some pictures with nuance and finesse. A song like (Rich Deans') *Paulita's Lament*, the story of Billy the Kid as seen by the woman he left behind, is particularly remarkable; its rhythm of a slow waltz complemented by the accordion played by Daniel A. Weiss quickly haunts the listener. Billy Masters' production is, as usual, impeccable and the guest musicians know how to bring the right note where it is necessary. Warren Hood on mandolin (*New York Winter*) or on fiddle (*Buffalo Jump*) or Bob Hoffnar on pedal steel (*I know About Your Broken Heart*, *Aquamarine*) bring a country sound to some of the titles. Susan Kane is also a dedicated "Deadhead" and covers two tunes by Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter (*Loser* and *Row, Jimmy*). New York Americana fans have good days ahead with artists of this caliber.

FLYIN SHOES REVIEW

JOHN DAVY

2/4/13

This is a quite wonderful album from Susan Kane, a folk singer from the New York area with a beautifully rich voice and a superbly understated technique. Her previous album (her second) was picked up by the excellent Iain Anderson on Radio Scotland as an album of the week – easy to see why if it was anything like as good as this.

Word Child takes its title from an Iris Murdoch novel and features half a dozen Susan Kane original songs. The rest of the album is an eclectic range of covers – two Grateful Dead songs and an adaptation of an old Irish poem that, itself, was translated from the Gaelic being the further reaches of Susan Kane's song searches. Through all these songs runs a deeply romantic thread that takes us into a sensual world where the emotion of the moment is paramount. Much as I appreciate social commentary, protest and all the other staples of folk song, it's a lush pleasure to be taken into this timeless world of pure feeling.

Musically, this album is nigh on perfect. Recorded in Austin under the guidance of guitarist Billy Masters, there's quite a list of stellar support from the likes of fiddle maestro Warren Hood and bass player Glenn Fukunaga. Opening with the Susan Kane song *Around The Bend*, these guys offer an immediate demonstration of controlled power; they sound as tight as a drum skin as they strut their way through an arrangement that borders on a kind of swampy funk. Susan Kane's

voice is imperiously relaxed, like the master midfield player who doesn't seem to break sweat and always has time in hand to apply the killer touch. That sets the mark, and the quality is maintained from start to finish as quite beautifully sympathetic playing from the band always seems "just right" in support of Susan Kane's warm, thoughtful singing. If I had to pick one track to highlight, then it would be the Grateful Dead song, *Loser*. This has such a gorgeous melody – milked for all it's worth here – that it's just irresistible; the harmony vocals when the chorus comes round are killer, but then so is the mood conjured by Billy Masters on guitars and J J Johnson on drums – perfectly elegiac in tone.

Susan Kane's got as beautiful a folk voice as you could hope to hear but, better than that, she sings her songs like she's living them and thereby gives them huge force and resonance. This feels like a proper collection of songs and an album to be treasured through the years ahead.

John Davy, *Flyinshoes Review*, February 2013

Euroamericana Chart reporter, recommended pick for February 2013 report

RICHARD CUCCARO (NERFA 2012)

Susan Kane - A Word child

Susan Kane's first love, musically, would appear to be country/rock and, aided by producer Billy Masters and his guitar prowess, she pays her respects admirably. On "Loser," Susan shows that she knows how to portray a sultry femme fatale: Don't you touch hard liquor just a cup of cold coffee / I'm gonna get up in the morning and go... put your gold money where your love is, baby / before you let my deal go down. "Donal Og," a Celtic ballad adapted from the poem by Lady Gregory, is a departure from the overall country vibe. "I Know About Your Broken Heart," with its lush pedal steel, is a stunner which reminds me of some of the country/western ballads of the '50s. Packed with great songs, solid vocals and great guitar, this CD is an attention-getter.

Richard Cuccaro, *Acoustic Live in New York City, The Great NERFA 2012 CD Haul*