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Album Review: Mercyland - Hymns for the Rest of Us

By: Corey Parkman

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Songwriter Phil Madeira's **Mercyland: Hymns for the Rest of Us** does a great deal in the way of disproving the axiom "the devil has all the best tunes" with this solid collection of Americana-tinged spiritual songs.

Joining him on 10 original (all but one of which Madeira co-wrote) and 2 traditional songs about faith are some of the biggest artists from the fringes of pop, country, rock and Americana including the North Mississippi Allstars, The Civil Wars and Emmylou Harris. Besides the excellent roster, one of the greatest strengths of this collection is its open approach to spirituality, without coming off as wishy-washy.

Religion isn't the point here; belief and love are the overriding themes. Still, you never get the feeling that Madeira is pandering to PC concerns, only celebrating a common search for God, or at least, an appreciation for spiritual music.

The first standout track for me is "Give God the Blues" whose vocals are provided by folk-pop songwriter Shawn Mullins. This song is a clever confession that no matter what faith we come from, be it Hindu, Christian or no faith at all, we all manage to give God something to worry about.

Another strong take is Christian artist Cindy Morgan's "Leaning on You." In it, she reveals that even in the difficult times, sometimes her faith is not as strong as it should be.

The album ends with a soulful take on "Peace in the Valley" from jazz guitarist John Scofield. It's a thoughtful conclusion to a cohesively devotional set.

Mercyland is for anyone, even the nonbelievers. This record clearly reveals that common bond of music is stronger than any differences we have. Highly recommended to fans of any of the artists, or anyone in need of something a little more profound than country radio provides.



Corey Parkman is the Editor/owner of the parody website Farce The Music and graciously allowed us to syndicate this review here for you. Please visit www.farcethemusic.com and enjoy a hearty laugh or two!

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