

Garth Dutton "Long Weekend 2" CD 2006

Garth Dutton "Long Weekend 2" CD 2006 Now here's an idea! Got a nagging feeling that your last CD could have been better? Could have perhaps had more time spent on it? More money (had it been available of course)? Or perhaps the songs have dated musically or, as in this case, subsequent events mean the lyrics of some of the songs have become dated (a lesson here perhaps for all aspiring songwriters?)

ANSWER: Do it again!

So Garth Dutton has followed up his CD of a few years back, "Long Weekend", with, erm, "Long Weekend 2". It is basically an update of the previous CD including all of the previous tracks in new arrangements or upgraded recordings, plus 6 additional tracks not previously available. And with more attractive packaging, better production standards etc. Overall, it's a big improvement. It could just as easily have been called "The Best of Garth Dutton", as it opens with Garth's first-written song "Lourenco Marques", finishes with his most recent (at the time of recording), and covers a wide range of Garth's best songwriting over the years in between. But such a title would not have been Garth's style, and would have missed the point, which was to present "Long Weekend" in a better light. To do this, Garth has wisely chosen to use first-rate musicians, principally Julian Barnett (who also appeared on the first version), with some extra tasty bass from Corey Stewart, and to embellish the limitations of his own vocals with some tasteful backing vocals from Catherine Blanch (also on the first version).

As mentioned above, the CD opens with "Lourenco Marques", which has been lifted above the previous version by the addition of a snare drum playing a marching beat, which adds an exotic feel intended by the lyric. Then follows a bright new arrangement of one of Garth's best known songs, "Goyder's Line". With an incredibly infectious chorus, the listener is tapping the toe well before realising they are being given a history lesson. If only all history lessons were this infectious! Next is a song I hold in very high regard, "The Separation Game" in which the sad procession of marital breakdown becomes a charade.

Another standout from the first disc for me, 'Holy Relics', has a much brighter vocal and the lyrics are clearer, but for me some of the edge has gone from from the earlier sneer of 'Is it just I don't believe anymore', although this is in some way compensated by a nice moody bass line.' Elsewhere Garth tackles the big issues such as the environment, both from a humorous view (being an environmentalist with a leaded petrol car) to the more serious ("the nights are getting warmer/as the greenhouse effect takes hold') and the (not so wonderful) wonders of nuclear technology.

This won't be a CD for everyone. No album is. The vocal phrasing still sounds fragile and hesitant in places. In a competitive world, many will overlook this CD, even in its improved form. But away from the glitz, glamour and noise of showbiz, it is a quiet pleasure sometimes to listen to the intimate voice of the poet. There is much of value on this CD, and I commend it to your listening.

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