

I've been listening to your vinyl edition of "Rockville" most of the week, intently and as ambient music. Both experiences resonate in different ways. First of all, how great is it to hold an album, appreciate the artwork, and actually read the lyrics? I'm glad you made the extra effort to go vinyl. When I listened to it as I was busy with other things, the distance from intent did not degrade the experience. Not even the hassle of flipping the record over occurred to me, as I needed to finish the album. And that's the point of a unified work, isn't it? To listen to the whole effort.

"Rockville" is beautifully produced and shows tremendous pop restraint. Nothing gets in the way of the songs and the support players instinctively honor this commitment. The songs come forward smartly, with the melodies exploiting those rare turns that burrow into memory and make music distinct. The unpredictable chords make sense and anchor the melodic risks. There's joy and sadness in the turns, and like all worthwhile songs crafted from the heart, the album is inevitably about love.

From the very first song, "High Notes," we know of your sensibilities--"Don't Worry Baby" and 'Good Vibrations' threw me over a cliff." Indeed! You have thoroughly honored your muses. I'm reminded a little of when Brian Wilson recovered enough from the "Smile" albatross to release three subsequent albums of quieter, more reflective pop composing, revealing a wounded heart, but one full of hope. Toss in your affection for Beatles, and you have created a difficult mélange of British and California pop, but with your own progressions and willingness to take chances with melody and subtle orchestrations. Each song explores its own territory and the production breathes really well, with no clutter. Deep into the album, "Good Vibrations" is invoked again in "Favorite Son," but this time in service of a prayer to forgiveness and resolve. And the last song--my favorite so far--"Rockville," ends the album as a homily to the permanent archetype of going home, to reclaim memories and experience and see through their truths and myths in order to catch up with oneself to see if you are intact.

I can tell the care you took in every aspect of this record--from the writing, recording, performing, production, and the packaging to the sequencing of songs. In this way, your songs accumulate into a narrative, but not one told in obvious ways. Good song writers always invoke the lyricism of mystery and leave it to the listener to assemble meaning for themselves. Well done, Mr. Sheveloff.

Ed M.
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