

## **The Force Gazette - March 2011: Smalltown Revival - New Sonic Arrival ! - by Jason Eastwood**

"Don't wanna be known for just one song, but simply livin' and driftin' along". This fine line from 'One Way Streets', one of the thirteen tracks off of "Music From Home", the debut album from Golden's Smalltown Revival, offers a nice shade of insight into the bearded philosophy of the band's chief songwriter, vocalist and guitarist John Jenkins. Jenkins and his brother Dan, who supplies bass grooves akin to a gentle rolling prairie, are known to many via their previous project Swerving Gently.

Taking up where Swerving Gently left off, Smalltown Revival dig deeply into a folk-inspired, moody and atmospheric world on "Music from Home". This title is an apt one seeing as the album was recorded almost entirely in Golden by Nanaimo producer Jordan Stringer, who brought the recording gear to the band instead of the other way around. "We recorded the piano in a trailer with seven microphones strategically placed to capture as much sound as possible," explains John. The resulting recording speaks volumes. The ethereal bar room piano sounds as if it was recorded in Bruce Hornsby's \$100 K studio, sans The Range.

The album's opening vignette "Into the Woods" sets the mood with a short snapshot of a flute tinged wake, possibly held by Tom Waits, for Jenkins' past sounds. Gone, but not forgotten, you get the feeling right away that this album is going to be different. The first full song on the album is "Year 77". Johnny brings us in with one of his trademarks - percussively mesmerizing acoustic guitar strumming. This is followed by a few notes of gloriously restrained piano calling us to attention for the forthcoming sonic adventure. Yannick has the midas touch on this recording. His time woodshedding with the piano in a trouse just outside Golden has had a profound effect on his ivory tickling prowess.

"Come out Dancing" lays some beautifully reverb drenched twang guitar into a hillbilly Bar Mitzvah starring Gillian Whelan on the strings. Gill weaves gentle, dark melodies through the infectious groove with flowing string lines that really take the listener away. The Smalltown crew fully let go of the hot air balloon rope for "A Way with Words". The tune magnificently capitalizes on a spaghetti western aesthetic while Jenkins melodically comments on the idea of songwriting itself. The song "Smalltown Revival" is a Buck Owens type stomper; "One Way Streets" takes us into a Mod style (groovy baby!) territory; "Transient Man" treats us to a nice snippet of Musique Concrete, and "Break of Day" brings us back with some acoustic guitar driven funk complete with wahwah and Isaac Hayes inspired shots. The band has a lot of fun exploring styles on this album while keeping their natural flow well intact.

"50 Dollars" is a dub-folk extravaganza that would make Lee Scratch Perry proud, and Dan Jenkins channels the soul of Charlie Daniels for the wonderfully quirky "Somethin' About". The last three tracks I'll leave as a surprise, though I will say they contain some beautiful surprises themselves. Overall, the combination of Stringer's enthusiastic and sonically encapsulating production, Jenkins' universally heartfelt lyrics and the inimitable vocals, great performances by Dan, Yannick, Gill, Don Stenner (percussion) and Stringer (percussion), and some great back up singing by Gill and Cory Coultis, makes "Music from Home" a vividly warm small town affair with a big valley vibe. You can get your copy of Smalltown Revival's "Music from Home" on Friday, March 11th, 2011 at the Golden Curling Club. The CD release party starts at 8pm and goes all night. Twenty Bucks gets you a ticket for the show and a CD! Rock on!