

REVIEWS

DERROLL ADAMS

Banjo Troubadour Starman Records
SMR037

WIZZ JONES

A Life On The Road 1964 – 2014 Sunbeam
Records SBRC5103



Two legendary songsters for whom the term 'on the road' has always meant considerably more than just the title of a paperback book stuck in a duffel coat pocket.

With most albums by the late Derroll Adams, the wandering Zen banjo master from Oregon, long out of print, this brand new twelve-inch vinyl release (CD included) is very welcome indeed. Recorded live for Belgian National Radio 1973-1980, the ten solo tracks here are mostly traditional songs – *Darling Corey*, *Blue Ridge Mountain*, *Columbus Georgia*, *Wildwood Flower* (heard on this issue's fRoots 53 compilation) along with Woody Guthrie's *I Ain't Got No Home In This World Anymore*, and his own *The Sky*.

It's always thrilling to hear that wonderfully rich, deep and strong singing voice, and that remarkable instrumental technique, but this live recording also offers the opportunity to hear Adams' laconic introductions and gentle, often self-deprecating humour ("here's a song we used to do together, 97 years ago – we were only 48 years old at the time...")

Derroll Adams was the songwriter and singer that the others (Ralph McTell, Finbar Furey, Donovan, Wizz Jones and Allan Taylor among them) wrote and sang about. This record – lovingly packaged in a gatefold sleeve bearing a striking Dave Peabody photograph, reminds us why.

"Derroll Adams and Jack Elliott were my heroes..." declares Wizz Jones, in the highly entertaining sleevenotes of *A Life On The Road*. "...when they performed in London in the late '50s I followed them around like a little dog." Since then, of course, he's inspired countless followers himself and this 23-track retrospective of a career spanning half a century should gain him a few more.

The best of his own songs – *Night Ferry*, *Burma Star*, *Happiness Was Free*, and (the Bruce Springsteen-covered) *When I Leave Berlin* are here, alongside enduring repertoire staples like *Corrine's Blues*, *Shuckin' Sugar* and *Glory Of Love*. Long-term writing collaborator Alan Tunbridge is represented with *Dazzling Stranger* and *National Seven*, and there's a song apiece from Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger and Ewan MacColl – the latter a duet with Martin Carthy on *Moving On Song*, previously only available on the *Guitar Maestros* DVD. Many of these tracks are rare recordings or alternate versions, making this both an essential purchase for long-time Wizzfans and a perfect introduction for new ones.



Photo: Dave Peabody

Derroll Adams

The album is dedicated to Wizz's fallen comrades Bert Jansch and Clive Palmer, both of whom feature, as do Ralph McTell, John Renbourn, Lazy Farmer and Pete Berryman. Nary an issue of this magazine passes without us bemoaning a world that affords so little acclaim to such a giant as Wizz Jones, so buy this album and make him famous!

www.derrolladams.org

www.wizzjones.com

Stephen Hunt