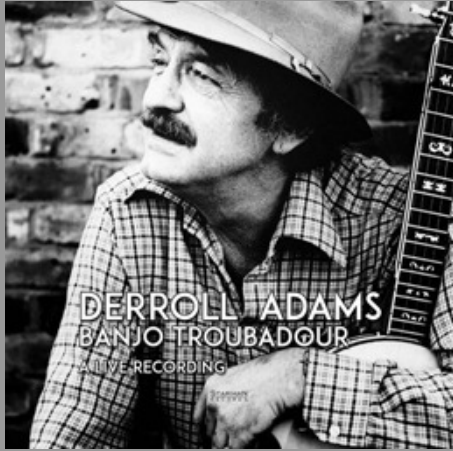


the banjo driven songwriting / roots folk of
Derroll Adams

rec.1973/1980->LP+CD ('15)



Starman Rec.

Derroll Adams : Banjo Troubadour -a live recording- (B/US.pub.2015)****

Derroll Adams is remembered today as "the banjoman", as "the man who brought to banjo to Europe" and as a storyteller, and I would also say for his warm voice.

His debut in 1957, "Portland Town", with that classic song, (interpreted by people like Joan Boaz, Arlo Guthrie, Marianne Faithful, Wizz Jones, Vera Coomans, Marianne Faithful, etc.)*, was recorded with Ramblin' Jack Elliott. Despite his being well known and becoming talked about legend, not much was recorded during his lifetime.

Having come to live in Belgium just after that debut (Brussels for 9 years and Antwerp for over 30 years, for the rest of his years), luckily Belgium Nation radio (at that time VRT) did a few recordings in 1973 as well as in 1980, which were only recently rediscovered by the label by browsing into the radio's archived tapes.

It is in such live recording that the total concept of Derroll's music becomes clear. It is not just about a warm voice, but about the cosines of telling stories that are brought back from generations, with a presentation that doesn't lack humour, treating the banjo as his wife and companion who despite the banjo's slight unpredictable character behaves perfectly but cannot cook well, with an honesty that is disarming, even telling the public when he switched a verse or when he felt it had a weird ending.

The atmosphere often recalls that of the first American settlers who shared their stories and thus created bonds. At the same time it also recalls different American roots traditions, like a touch of train whistle or workman blues, almost like coming from a long gone era where life was harsher, while having traveled further, some of it can still be vividly remembered. It is not just about music but about reviving those memories, something Derroll succeeds to evoke well.

I especially like side A, the Elckerlick / Antwerp session of 1980 in which such stories come over extremely well. The banjo is played quickly, with fast pickings, rhythmically following the song line, a bit independently, like a train track rhythm and while all images of the story being told are passing by, one gets the feel for the rhythm of it, the rhythm of how life took these with them, and while it passed by, they were not just remembered but became part of the traceable track. Underneath each story was tragedy but also a human being simply trying to live his life and doing what it honestly simply had to do despite whatever happened or despite any form of expression life demanded it had to be or become. All such events become forgivable.

A nice document which proves it isn't just the classic songs like "Portland Town", "Oregon", "The mountain", "The valley" that are the highlights of a career. In the right setting all of the performing songs can become classics to be heard and to be remembered and that's how I personally would like to remember Derroll. This album is successful in trying to achieve that purpose well.

* For those interested, there exist also few psych-pop versions, like by Them, Ruphus Zuphall,...

Videos : https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=derroll+adams

Homepage: <http://derrolladams.org>

Derroll info: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derroll_Adams

Label: <https://www.facebook.com/StarmanRecords> & <http://www.starmanrecords.com>

Info: [http://www.frontview-magazine.be/...](http://www.frontview-magazine.be/)