

Songs Of Woody Guthrie (and Tales Worth Telling) Volume 2

Includes 4 newly-completed Guthrie songs and guests
Jackson Browne, Arlo Guthrie, Jimmy LaFave,
Van Dyke Parks, The Burns Sisters & Jennifer Warnes

"Woody wrote it the way he saw it, from every angle,"
-Joel Rafael

After releasing three well-received CDs of original material since 1994, the nationally acclaimed and award-winning singer-songwriter Joel Rafael felt like it was time to honor one of his formative inspirations, the late Woody Guthrie, godfather of topical folk music. On *Woodeye*, a 2003 release on Jackson Browne's Inside Recordings label, the acoustic, San Diego-based Joel Rafael Band recorded a dozen Guthrie compositions, both familiar and rare; a Rafael original about Woody's hometown of Okemah, Oklahoma; and, most significantly, a previously unpublished Guthrie lyric ("Dance a Little Longer") set to music by Rafael with the blessing of Woody's daughter Nora Guthrie, director of the Woody Guthrie Foundation and Archives. "He's one of the true interpreters," Nora said of Rafael, who has been a longtime performer at the annual Woody Guthrie Free Folk Music Festival in Okemah and has played Guthrie material alongside his original songs for decades.

Joel wasn't ready to stop, though. Having made one album "that would bring a Woody Guthrie experience to a new audience," he wanted to present more of the thousand-plus unpublished and unrecorded lyrics Guthrie left behind after his 1967 death of the degenerative Huntington's disease. In selecting Guthrie lyrics to complete with music, "I was looking for songs that would show off his tremendous lyric skills and his appetite for diverse subject matter," says Rafael, "For songs that would demonstrate his timeless sense of how things work and the way things are."

Woodyboye: Songs of Woody Guthrie (and Tales Worth Telling), Volume 2 expands *Woodeye's* achievements by shifting the balance of Guthrie originals to include four songs combining Woody's lyrics and Joel's melodies amongst its eleven Guthrie-penned tracks, plus another Woody-esque Rafael original. The new CD is indeed full of tales worth telling to a 21st Century audience, about political martyrs Sacco and Vanzetti ("Two Good Men"), the Dust Bowl disenfranchised ("Heaven My Home"), and Guthrie-like cross-country ramblers driven by compulsion or circumstance ("Stepstone," "Ramblin' Reckless Hobo"). Strong women save the day in a pair of Wild West adventures ("Rangers Command," "Circle of Truth") and are courted in the playful "Way Over Yonder in the Minor Key" (a Guthrie lyric with its tune added by England's Billy Bragg, one of Woody's international torchbearers). The eerie "Dance Around My Atom Fire," one of the songs completed by Joel, is a temperate welcome to the nuclear age, with its potential for "brotherhood or a world of ashes." Guthrie's faith in God ("Your Sandal String") and man's potential ("Love Thyself" and "This Train is Bound for Glory," the CD's best-known song), adds extra dimensions to this complex man's world view. Rafael's one original composition, the heartbreaking "Sierra Blanca Massacre," recounts a true-life 1987 tragedy involving undocumented Mexican immigrants, whose plight was the topic of several Guthrie songs.

This spectrum of events and ideas is lovingly colored by the authenticity and empathy of Rafael's trio (Joel on mature, unaffected vocals and guitar; daughter Jamaica Rafael on violin and harmony vocals and Carl Johnson on acoustic lead guitar and backing vocals), who are joined on various tracks by established solo artists Jackson Browne, Joel's fellow Guthrie-ophile Jimmy LaFave (who trades verses on "Stepstone" with Joel and Jackson), Woody's son Arlo Guthrie, the Burns Sisters, and Jennifer Warnes on guest vocals. Van Dyke Parks, who penned the lyrics for Brian Wilson's long-shelved but recently and triumphantly revived *SMiLE* CD, provides understated flavoring on piano and accordion. Other contributing musicians include Matt Cartsonis (banjo, mandola) who has performed with Warren Zevon, Warnes, and Parks, among others, and a rhythm section comprised of Mauricio Lewak, Jackson Browne's drummer, and Will Landin, Jimmy LaFave's bassist.

Forged by Joel Rafael's vision of keeping Woody Guthrie's old songs alive and bringing unheard Guthrie lyrics to a new generation of listeners without artificial attempts at modernization, *Woodyboye* is a triumph of genuine and meaningful folk music by two of our country's finest songwriters.

