

'Carrot'

Roots Music with Attitude Indeed!

CD review by John Gardiner



If asked to categorize Canadian singer/songwriter Richard Knechtel's new CD, "Carrot", I would have to say it's simply GREAT MUSIC. Smart lyrics, catchy melodies, spirited instrumental solos - it has everything it takes to make a terrific recording.

With the first tune, "Swimming Pool", Knechtel delivers poignant lyrics that challenge the listener. From there he continues to roll out song after song you want to hear.

The haunting "Hangin' Around my Head" conjures up images of Kurt Weill and the cabaret with its saxophone solo and the sounds of the melodeon. Following that, "Walk on Water" is the story of the Walkerton water tragedy delivered by someone who lived through it.

Knechtel, who has been writing and recording songs for over 30 years, uses his wealth of experience to weave a musical web. Around his warm, distinctive vocal style you discover soaring violin sections, gutsy guitar parts and dynamic harmonica solos.

Diversity is the key to this album's success. There are songs with a serious message, like "Freedom" and the title track "Carrot on a Stick", but there are also fun songs like "I'm Sorry Charlene", a throwback to the days of real rock'n'roll with its rollicking piano solo and playful back-up vocals.

And just when you think you've heard the best that the CD has to offer, along comes "Happy Lives", the finale to a great listening experience. The optimistic message is one that touches you and the exquisite strings carry you to a harmonious closing.

Sincerity and honesty are the distinctive qualities obvious in all of Richard Knechtel's recordings - that comes across clearly on "Carrot". Whether he's singing, playing guitar or harmonica, there's just something that tells you it's real, honest music. Knechtel calls the music on "Carrot", "roots music with attitude", and there's more than a little truth to that.

"Carrot" is the first collaboration between Knechtel and Justin Burgess who co-produced the album and played a variety of instruments in a supporting role. The combination of a pro like Knechtel and an emerging talent like Burgess results in an exciting recording that will attract attention on the Canadian music scene.

"Carrot" is a great piece of work. This is the most convincing package of songs released to date by Knechtel, showcasing his ability as a talented musician and songwriter. And what more can any recording artist hope to accomplish than that!

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