

BRISON BURSEY “Expectations and Parking Lots”

I first heard Brison Bursey at a Galleywinter benefit show in October 2008. In a sea of acoustic guitar chord bangers singing covers and unoriginal originals, Bursey sliced through it all and made me stop having a conversation to pay attention. We talked after he finished and I thanked him for participating in the benefit. He gave me his first album. I listened to it on the way home and was underwhelmed. Where was the guy I saw performing a few hours earlier? Well, I now have my answer. He's on this new Brison Bursey album entitled *Expectations and Parking Lots*.

This new album is a giant, creative leap forward that finds Bursey's songs recorded at the famed Docksider Studios in Maurice, LA and produced by Justin Tocket. Docksider has been home to such roots stalwarts as Derek Trucks, Leon Russell, Marc Broussard, and even Randy Rogers Band. Tocket and the famed studio provide the perfect elixir for awakening the best Bursey has to offer. Bursey stands out from the crowd with a voice that sounds as if it is a Gary Allan/Ken Block from Sister Hazel combination and lyrics that penetrate to the soul of a universal southern experience. The songs and vibe are in the rootsy American rock vein that shares common ground with artists such as Will Hoge, Ray LaMontagne, Matt Nathanson and the aforementioned Broussard.

I immediately dug the entire record once I heard it. The production and mix produced the type of music that refuses to be labeled as it features just the right balance of soul, country and rock. Two songs dug their talons into my eardrums quicker than the others, "California Can" and "I've Been Waiting". Each of these tunes has a mythical Chris Isaak-*Forever Blue*/Keith Gattis-*Big City Blues* quality. Bursey is comfortable with his voice, both lyrically and vocally, and that is most evident on these two sonically dynamic tracks. Each track builds from the first note to the chorus with the type of passionate convictions and inescapable melodies that one doesn't typically find in a young Texas artist. In other words, these two tracks reminded me of mid-tempo sequels to the Gattis-penned "El Cerrito Place".

Upon further listening I began to realize that this entire record is made up of similarly emotionally charged material. This is a young songwriter not afraid to speak the truth from his heart, unconcerned with popular trends or sales. These are the cathartic types of songs that a songwriter must write for to be at peace with their life, their mistakes and their triumphs. "It Ain't Always Easy" is a southern California pop-rock song that rolls from intro to finish effortlessly complete with a Weezer-esque bridge section. The big and bombastic production on the ballad "Look At You Now (Wedding Gown)" is evenly matched by the convincing delivery of the chorus from Bursey. The record closes with the most country sounding tune in this collection, "Balloon". The song evokes *Shotgun Willie* era Willie Nelson as it is a cheery blast of rowdiness about sticking your problems in a van with a country band while throwing caution to the wind.

Lately, I've had new records cross my desk that either had tremendous musical production or clever lyrics...but not often enough have I encountered a disc that encompasses both aspects in such a fresh way as *Expectations and Parking Lots*.

-Brad