MacDonald King Aston

Fire Eater! Editor

Singing the South

A Review of Robert Lloyd's *Rebel Private*

6 June 2004

I found the CD waiting for me in the mailbox at night. Too late to give it a real listen, so I put it off until the morning. Up in the early morn, grabbed a cup of tea, lit a seegar, put on the album, and turned it up loud and proud. OK, you should know right off that I'm biased. I've been listening to a few of these songs for a while now, Robert having been gracious enough to send me advance mixes (not to mention the free downloads on his site).

The thing is, if you're gonna listen to Robert's music, you'd better prepare yourself to listen, as in listen. Robert's music is, to foolishly encapsulate it, personal. It speaks to persons, not to demographics nor to popular taste (which, in general, is neither popular not tasteful). Rebel Private might just as well have been titled Private Rebel, since it pours from Robert's heart his convictions, his anger, his open spirituality. This album gives us imagery, thoughts, and toe-tappin' picking and singing wrapped up in the human suitcase of righteous anger (*Ain't Gonna Take No More*), righteous grief (*Sammy's Song*), and a righteous sense of a world gone wrong (*Not A World Without Pain*). Even the one love song, I'm Just Scared To Say, is intensely personal, delivered in a soft and cracking vocal.

Rebel Private opens with the *Bells of Bonnie Blue*, a wash of strings and a bell that rings its dirge in a bleak sonic landscape. The sounds of war and artillery fading out to laboured breathing. Someone is dying. Somewhere. Probably on those heights above Fredericksburg, for right away we have *I Ask You, Sir (Angel of Marye's Heights)*. Female harmonies sparkling against the Angel's prayer to the Lord to bring comfort and mercy to the dying yankees up on Marye's Heights. The artillery in the background lending an ominous note, the cry goes out:

> *I hear the cry of brave men that die*
> *I ask you sir, what can I do?*
> *I hear them calling, call out in pain,*
> *I ask you sir, what can I do?*
> *I ask you sir, what can I do?*

By the end of the song, you know you're in for a LISTEN.

Poor Poor Man, which follows, is one of my favourites. The cut on the album seems to have been remixed from the original version I first heard, with Robert's voice more to the front. *Poor Poor Man* is the classic "Will you still love me" genre, done up right:

> *If I was born to be a poor, poor man, would you still love me as I am?*
> *Would you love me or leave me? A poor, poor man.*

If you dont love me girl, I understand.

A simple guitar line accentuates the equally simple chord structure, a nice fillip to contrast the lyrics. It is a technique reminiscent of old-fashioned country music, and works well here.

The title cut, *Rebel Private*, opens with some tasty acoustic picking, with arpeggiation mixed with small "runs". The acoustic guitar is recorded well, and Robert's voice blends better in the mix than in some of the other songs. The guitar runs form a "hook" that give the song its distinctive air. As with many of Robert's songs, *Rebel Private* provides a visual scene where one finds an eternal figure or message or both. "The Rebel Private's got to carry on."

Ain't Gonna Take No More is vintage Lloyd. Fire Eater. Dang good song. It reminds me of some of the protest songs from the sixties (Country Joe?), except that its message is moral:

The chorus:

I ain't gonna pay your taxes, and I ain't gonna play your fool,
I live my life for Jesus Christ no matter what you say or do;
I've made my bed and you can kill me dead,
Wont change what I'm fightin' for;
Cause I've made up my mind, it's just 'bout time, I ain't gonna take no more.

A verse:

Don't wait for me to say I'm sorry,
You'll be waitin' for a long, long time;
Cause I'm living free as I want to be and never looking back again.
Now I'm much too old to do as I'm told,
What's this world gonna do with me?
I'll go to my grave no more your slave and that's how it's gonna be.

The song ends on a hilarious admission of what it means to stand alone against the Empire, with a quick mix-in of the Star Trek character, Whorf, snarling, "Not yet, human!"

As Robert sings: "Whooey!"

The best poetry and the best lyrics ground themselves in vivid imagery, and *Brave and Silent Horseman* (co-written with Luckie McDonald) is one imagistic tapestry, painting a picture of a lone Confederate, set in a timeless glade, confronting a band of yankees. The Lone Horseman of the Apocalypse. The Confederate horseman who "fought with Lee to defend this very land". Dead horseman. Never give up. A Lloyd theme.

I see the puddles from the rain on the ground
They're turning red and pouring down...

William Carlos Williams got nothing on Robert here.

I shouldn't even be allowed to comment on *Here in Grannyland*, given my own run-in with Grannies of late. But Robert intends to poke fun at what might graciously be called the "meet, eat, and retreat" bunch within the Southern movement. Some will, no doubt, read this song as a rant against the SCV, in particular. But it really is a rant against all weak-kneed, lily-livered, fence-sitters everywhere, no matter to what group they belong. As Robert said, "We must have fun still as it isn't ALL work and no play. I hope both the grannies and progressives within the SCV can laugh at this one. Probably not is my guess. But I can hope."

Their majesties, the Grannies!
Here's a Granny, there's a Granny...

Dont do this and you cant do that (yeah, stop that!)
Mind your beeswax and dont attack (now, now!)
You might offend if you defend our land
Here in Grannyland (and dont sing Dixie!)

...cant you see the SCV is just for girls like me (I'm a sissy!)
(That is against the rules, and it's Mr Dees to you)

...Listen kids it's not your land, this is Grannyland!
(It's ours, all of it! It's all ours! Dont do nothing! I wont!)
Here in Grannyland!

Well, at least I have a theme song now.

I'm Just Scared to Say is a love song with a bell-clear Strat holding down the rhythm.

Should I tell you how I feel about you?
Should I say I think the world turns around you?
Then I'm scared to say that I love you...

Robert's delivery makes this song worth listening to, with his abovementioned soft and cracking voice. Play this one for your wife on Valentine's Day with a cold bottle of Champagne handy.

Recently, on Reinout Temmerman's Southern Rights website in Europe (southernrights.tk), I wrote an article calling for more recognition and appreciation of the Confederate States Allied Europe, a dedicated group of Europeans who defend the Cause of Dixie across the pond. Lo and behold, Robert wrote a song, *Lest We Forget (CSA-E)*, which has become the anthem for the CSA-E, with its 6/8 lilting rhythm: "Forgive and forget we will not." Sort of tells it all right there.

Lincoln's Total War offers up a dark pad of voices and instruments. Back to the Apocalypse again. Percussion mixed in, then to a fade. And on to *Who Could Be A Rich Man*, another favourite of mine, a straight out brilliant song with a heart-wrenching vocal and a muted electric guitar lead to break the song into two parts:

Who could be a rich man when the children starve at night?
Who could watch an eagle fly when a child wont stand upright?

But why's there a blind girl when the sun just shines so bright?
Who could be a rich man when the children starve at night?

Pt. Lookout (Let Freedom Ring) fights back against the damnyankees who wont let the Flag of Freedom fly above the graves of our Confederate kin at Pt. Lookout:

> The Confederate flag is to be subordinate to the United States flag in size and prominence of display. When displayed on graves in conjunction with the United States flag on Memorial day, Confederate flags are placed 3 feet (.914m) in front of and centered on the headstone of deceased Confederate veterans. When displayed without the presence of the United States flag, as may be done on Confederate Memorial Day, the Confederate flag is placed 1 foot (.304) in front of and centered on the headstone of deceased Confederate veterans. (*Flags in VA National Cemeteries Handbook, Dept. of Vet. Affairs, Washington D.C.*)

This song is simply a plea for the truth. "Let the truth be known, let our flag be flown."

Sammy's Lullabye is Robert's answer to the Federals' murders on Ruby Ridge:

> "Seeing his dog, Striker, shot to death by masked intruders clad in camouflage, Sammy Weaver, 14, fired back in fear for his life. The 4 ft., 11" tall youngster was hit in the arm, then shot in the back as he turned to run for home. He died instantly, killed by an agent of the federal government. Cradling her 10-month-old daughter in her arms, Vicki Weaver stood in the doorway of her home, mourning her slain son, unaware that she herself had only seconds to live. In an instant a bullet tore into Vicki Weaver's face, blew through her jaw and severed her carotid artery. The bullet was fired from 200 yds. away by an agent of the federal government." *(The Randy Weaver Case, Jim Oliver, The Lawful Path: www.lawfulpath.com)*

Plaintive sax in a gentle opening wash of acoustic guitar, pad, bass and drums. No lyrics, as the music says all that can be said about those yankee murderers up on Ruby Ridge. FBI sniper Lon Horiuchi, who shot Vicki Weaver in the head while she was standing in her doorway, holding her baby in her arms, should listen to this track. And weep for his God damned soul.

When *Johnny Comes Marching* opens with the sounds of brass and the old tune, When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again. A quick fade-out leads to *Who Could Ask For More? (A Newly Born SCV Member)*: "To a new baby boy." Robert says "The song "Who Could Ask For More" was written for my stepson's baby boy who is qualified for membership in the SCV and still too young to know it, but will!" Neatly juxtaposed with the following song, *Not A World Without Pain*, which, I confess, is my favorite song of Robert's. I remember downloading this song from his website a few months ago and listening to it over and over. From there it made its way to my "truck collection" for listening on the roads of the Empire.

What can I say? Perfect melody. Perfect lyrics. A celebration of God's creation and of the Creator Himself. A hint of the sorrow that is our life in this world. I rarely listen to music "over and over again", but this is one of 'em. Mixed in are wind chimes and a gentle synth pad:

I've seen kittens and puppies play together
And lions among the lambs;
I've seen stranger things that drive a man insane
But not a world without pain.

This is the voice of a man standing in wonder and awe before God and His Creation.

When the seasons change and cold becomes the land
It chills my face and hands;
I can look back on the times and all the change,
But not a world without pain.

It's why I need your love, bathed in all Your kindness
I'm washed in each and every word
Cause when life's troubles come tumbling down
You pick me up from off the ground.

A great ending too, with a fascinating guitar change-up before the end. When I see Robert, I'll demand to know those chords. This song is alone worth the price of the album. A love song to our Lord written by a man who has seen His works up close.

*Bonnie Blue Fla*g is a rendering of the traditional Bonnie Blue Flag. Synth pad. Drum roll leading into Wishful Thinking Man, which song will almost certainly solidify Robert's place next to mine on the FBI's "Bad American of the Day" list.

I declare a war on America, on America...
Now I'm DC bound, gonna take this guvmint down...

Robert, the Grannies are gonna throw a hissy fit over this one. Bless you for having the...er...guts to write this, for we Fire Eaters are gonna eat it up. Listen up, Grannies. Read the liner notes first. "Yes sir, I am a Christian. No, sir, I am NOT an American. At best, I am an American without a country." How many of us nowadays are Americans without a country?

In Will You Come to Montgomery (For 2004 LoS Convention in Montgomery, Alabama), Robert celebrates the 10th anniversary of the League of the South (Robert: "I've never seen a group so committed to the ideals of freedom as they are and they sucked this sucker right into the movement"):

The Lord will be with us, this He promises always to be
Will you come to Montgomery
Will you come with me?
*Will you come to Montgomery and stand by m*e?

The second CD that comes with Rebel Private is a collection of historical narratives spoken by Robert and set against music. Brief portraits (Robert calls them "Heritage Minutes"): Lee, the Angel of Marye's Heights, the Immortal Six Hundred, the League of the South, Lincoln's total war against civilians: "Down South we dont call this a civil war."

Minor quibbles. If I were producing this album, I would trim back the lower frequencies in Robert's vocals and distribute them to the bass lines, thus opening up the stereo spectrum a bit more. I would have wished for a lyric sheet as well, because there's some dang good lyrics here. So much for quibbles.

The salient characteristic of all of Robert's recordings is THAT BIG VOICE, ranging from tender reflection to outright fire-eatin' rebel-

flung words. Rebel Private is no different. But if you think Robert's backed off, toned it down, genuflected at the feet of the Federals, you've got another think a'comin.

This album was made for Fire Eaters, and now I have the task ahead of me of adding it to my "truck collection" so I can listen to the words and music of the real America as I roll by on the highways of the American Empire, an American without an America.