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Fire Eater! Editor

Confederate Rose by Robert Lloyd: Music Review

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Out to the mailbox in the afternoon. Sure enough, there they were. Brand new books. Robert Lewis Dabney's, *The Prophet Speaks* (more good stuff from the great Southern theologian and, come to think of it, great Southerner period). *Chosen By God*, by R. C. Sproul, to go with the chapter on predestination in the book I'm writing; one has to get these things right. Or does one? And Bacevich's collection, *The Imperial Tense*, writings on the American Empire. Not bad. Two books on Christian theology and one on politics.

"Three cheers for Alice, no place to go; she hangs out with Elvis at his Heartbreak Hotel. She cries out in darkness, but no one else can tell if she's in heaven or in hell."

Perhaps I'm two-thirds better than the other third? Doubt it. But wait, there's a CD. Not only do I get the intellect massaged, but I also get music? Bob Lloyd's new album, Confederate Rose, lay beside the books. I'd received an email a couple days earlier, so I knew the album was ready, but I was anxious to get at the songs, for I'd had, courtesy of Confederate Mouse (Bob's squeaky and pathologically Southern alter-ego, for those not in the know), I'm sure, a preview of a couple of the songs already. Speaking of whom, check out the guitar licks by the aforementioned. Quite the glirine accomplishment.

Reviewers tend to think that they have to talk of every piece on an album. I refuse. Besides, there's 25 on this baby. Instead, how's about going for the favourites? To start with, the placement of *Amazing Grace* and *War's Over (1865)* impressed me. The former has a softly done swing to it, a kind of lazy, Mississippi (or Florida!) feel to it. Made me want to grab a dark, Mexican beer and relax to the Word made fresh. I did precisely that, and felt less guilty for doing so when I lit up an El Rey del Mundo *Suprema* to accompany it. Following the lilting *Amazing Grace* was the calliginous *War's Over*, which continued the mood of *Amazing Grace*. Just wish it lasted longer. I was just beginning to weep when Lloyd slipped in the upbeat *Cajun Cat*: "Most of my friends live South of Bunkie." (A town in the southern half of the State to where the cotton South stops and the Cajun South starts," according to Bob.)

Cracker's Lullaby, with its infant laughing in the Southern background, is an honest-to-goodness, old-fashioned lullaby. "Cracker's Lullaby, close your eyes." Some more good picking there also. "Cracker's Lullaby, my baby don't you cry, baby close your eyes." Have you noticed how rare lullabies are these days? I found an album of Celtic lullabies, but not much else. Perhaps there are hundreds out there, but they seem to elude me. So I played *Cracker's Lullaby* for Kana while he sipped on his cocktail. I mean bottle, of course. He enjoyed it so much, he fell asleep. I guess that's what lullabies are supposed to do. From the bouncy, Caribbean, *FreeFlorida* (tapped the ashes on my toes, dang it) to *Ice Dancer*. (Have you noticed that I am, in fact, talking about each tune? So much for discipline.) *Ice Dancer* is a classical piece. As Bob himself said in the album notes, "most classical music is merely bad music played well." Now there's a Lloyd quote to file away. But *Ice Dancer*, fortunately, was simply good music played well. It reminded me why I like cello better than any other orchestral instrument. *Ice Dancer* may surprise Lloyd fans, because it's not just another song, but an obviously well thought out little reverie. Bob, call Hollyweird; they need good scores, believe me. In a

way, *Hallelujah* continues in the same vein, despite the percussion, for it is also a sans-vocal piece.

You have to love a title like *I'm a Good/Bad Man*. "I'm a good example of a bad example/I'm no good at doing what I should be doing/Yes, I'm willing and able to remain unable...." A Christian confession "from a fool's perspective." Which may be the only perspective we have, according to Robert Lewis Dabney: "...for we are all partisans in the Commonwealth of King Jesus," saith the master, arguing against state education of our young. Amen. You see, the ability to read biblical theology of Dabney's Calvinist variety, while nursing a beer, while listening to Lloyd's *Confederate Rose*; obviously there's a (quick, need a Yuppie word here) synergy there. Yass. A synergy.

Pickup Trucks is really a surf song disguised as a Texas testosterone homily to that most Texan of conveyance. So you can listen to it on the way to the local Nascar track or equally in the waves in Florida. Wait. There are no waves in Florida. OK, you'll have to head to Newport Beach, then.

Three Cheers For Alice I had heard previously, when Bob kindly sent me a copy. When I first heard the song, I immediately thought of my other favourite Lloyd song, *Not A World Without Pain*, for this piece carries with it the same message.

> *Three cheers for Alice, no place to go; she hangs out with Elvis at his Heartbreak Hotel. She cries out in darkness, but no one else can tell if she's in heaven or in hell.*

This is the song for which this album was made, and if you were ever in doubt as to whether Bob Lloyd has the "depth," as the studio men say in LA, consider those doubts dispelled. Jesus, take care of us all, indeed, for do we not all "cry out in darkness"? A back-road glance at the soul itself. Out here in nowhere where we're all in our own world. Good thing I got that beer, for I've hung out far too long myself at that hotel. Bingo, Bob. You wrote another song that has the power to save someone, somewhere. And that is what music is: God Himself. Whether happy, reflective, or sad, it is His music to which we turn when we doubt our sanity in a world properly gone mad. *Three Cheers for Alice* is God's music, just as *Not A World Without Pain* before it.

The Southern Dead. Bob claims that this album is one of the last in which he will dwell on Southern themes. I know why, of course, what with the fragmentation of the Southern movement of late, but still I hope that he changes his mind, and at least puts one exclusively Southern song on every album "till Southern rivers cease to run." One can hope.

"Mr. Lincoln can you tell me, do you cry for your sins?" For the anger in my soul shall not wash away, "at least until my dying days." Considering that I had just written 30,000 words on that pathetic excuse of a man, I' listened to *Till My Dying Days* just to vent. Where's that beer?

Of course, if one is going to play that old Puritan song, *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, this is the version, for it has Dixie intermingled with it. That's right. Side-by-side with old Mrs. Howe's apocalyptic "terrible swift sword" anthem to an American dictator rings out *Dixie*. A kind of musical battle unto itself.

Confederate Rose is yet another solid piece of work from Mr. Lloyd. Sure goes well with those Mexican suds. Some albums don't, you know. Can you imagine listening to a Michael Jackson album while drinking Negra Modelo. I think not. (Can you imagine listening to a Jackson album in the first place?) Maybe Johnny Mercer or Nat King Cole (no, Nat would have to be a fine Cabernet).

I give *Confederate Rose* 5 Negra Modelos. Confederate Mouse gets one (his size, after all) for the fancy picking.

Song List:

Confederate Rose

God Save The South

Amazing Grace

War's Over (1865)

Cajun Cat (Remix)

Cracker's Lullaby

FreeFlorida

Ice Dancer

Hallelujah

I'm a Good/Bad Example

It's All About You

Lonestar Man

Money To Blow

Pickup Trucks

Three Cheers For Alice

The Right Thing To Do

Sand Castles

The Southern Dead

Till My Dying Days

Wishing You Merry Christmas

Battle Hymn of the Republic

When Your Dreams Die

Would You Cry?

He Died First

When Your Dreams Die 2