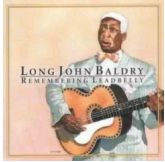


Long John Baldry – Remembering Leadbelly (2001)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 04 July 2011 18:41 - Last Updated Friday, 09 April 2021 20:50

Long John Baldry – Remembering Leadbelly (2001)



1. Lining Track - 1:51 2. Gallows Pole - 2:44 3. Midnight Special - 3:30 [play](#) 4. Take This Hammer - 3:32 5. Rock Island Line - 2:52 6. Good Morning Blues - 3:47 7. Go Down Old Hannah - 0:55 8. Birmingham Jail - 2:54 9. Here Rattler - 2:15 10. Easy Rider Blues - 3:10 11. We're In The Same Boat Brother - 3:34 12. John Hardy - 2:31 13. Digging My Potatoes - 3:13 [play](#) 14. On a Christmas Day - 2:52 15. Oh Mary Don't You Weep - 2:36 16. We Shall Walk Through The Valley - 5:42 17. Alan Lomax Interview - 6:26 18. Long John Baldry Interview - 6:36
Long John Baldry - 12-String Guitar, Vocals Kathi McDonald - Vocals Hans Stamer - National Steel Guitar, Harmonica, Trumpet, Vocals Chris Nordquist - Drums John Lee Sanders - Keyboards, Vocals Andreas Schuld - Acoustic & Electric Guitar, Slide, Ukelele, Vocals Norm Fisher - Bass Jesse Zubot - Fiddle, Mandolin, Violin Butch Coulter - Harmonica Tom Colclough - Clarinet Sybel Thrasher - Vocals and Tyee Montessori Elementary School Choir

"His songs touched me when I was a kid; they still talk to me, all these years later. His music is timeless; and there is an amazing variety in the topics and themes he sang about. Leadbelly was a Bluesman, storyteller, folk singer, activist, balladeer, and a man who wrote children's songs with the same conviction that he wrote about his travels through America 65 years ago. He was a unique artist, and I am honored, as well as humbled to perform his music." ---LJB - Long John Interview |

Huddie Ledbetter and Long John Baldry don't have a lot in common. One is tall, white, and willowy, while the other was short, black, and stout. One was an ex-con, accused of attempted murder, while the other has...well, murdered the odd cover tune. One is dead and one's still doing nicely, thank you. Leadbelly was the first black musician adopted by a white audience,

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while Baldry first emerged from Folk, Pop, and R&B circles.

Baldry has long been in awe of the work songs that helped the slaves endure hard labor. Who can forget his powerful treatment of Leadbetter's 'Black Girl' from 1971's *It Ain't Easy*, sung in duet with the like-voiced Maggie Bell? Sixteen tracks range from the simplistic prison song 'Lining Track' accompanied only by percussion, to the full-blown hymnal 'Oh Mary Don't You Weep,' with assistance from National Steel guitar, finger cymbals, and Sybel Thrasher's lush background vocals. Baldry's 12-string highlights the familiar 'Gallows Pole,' anchored by the aggressive fiddling of Jesse Zubot and given an almost Celtic feel by the slick ensemble. 'Take This Hammer,' one of the album's best tracks and some of the best Baldry in years. Another highlight is Baldry's take on 'John Hardy,' his voice nicely complemented by a 1865 pump organ and harmonium accompaniment - a peculiar treatment that makes for one of the disc's most poignant moments. 'Good Morning Blues' begins with a primitive tape Baldry made in '58 featuring a scratchy lead vocal and guitar; when it gives way to a modern recording, it nicely sums up this entire exercise. A worthy tribute. ---Eric Thom. *Blues Revue*

Long John Baldry came of age as a singer during the British blues boom, and it's obvious that his love of the music hasn't left him. As he explains in the interview track at the end, Leadbelly was his first musical inspiration, and here he has his chance to pay homage to the man. In his sixties at the time of this recording, Baldry's voice has improved with age, deepening a little and sounding more gravelly - just perfect for the grittiness of Leadbelly's songs, which ran the gamut from blues to folk, gospel, and beyond. It's an intelligent selection, ignoring the obvious 'Goodnight Irene' and 'In the Pines', while keeping defining moments like 'Rock Island Line' (the tune that launched skiffle in England), 'Birmingham Jail,' and 'We're in the Same Boat Brother'- it's remarkable just how familiar so much of the material is. The version of 'Gallows Pole' (much better known for its subsequent incarnation as a Led Zeppelin piece) roars with power and urgency, 'Lining Track' and 'John Hardy' (whose unusual arrangement centers around pump organ) are definitive railroad songs, while the hymns 'Mary Don't You Weep' and 'We Shall Walk Through the Valley,' though springing from an older well, were very much a part of the Huddie Leadbetter repertoire. There's even a children's song, 'On a Christmas Day,' showing yet another facet of the big man. Add in an interview with Alan Lomax, the folklorist who discovered Leadbelly and helped his career, and you have something that stands as more than a tribute, but a full portrait of a seminal American artist. ---Chris Nickson

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