

Zachary Cale - Blue Rider (2013)

Written by bluelover

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01. Unfeeling 02. Dollar Day 03. Hold Fast 04. Dear Shadow 05. Blood Rushes On 06. Hangman Letters 07. Wayward Son 08. Noise of Welcome

Often cited by critics and peers alike as a songwriter's songwriter, Zachary Cale has been quietly constructing a catalog for nearly a decade, one which showcases mastery and a unique voice across folk ballads, guitar instrumentals, and country-tinged rock.

On his 4th release, *Blue Rider*, Cale's songs are marked with his signature finger-style guitar playing and lyrical command. Abandoned are the full-band arrangements of his previous album, 2011's *Noise of Welcome*, for a minimalist approach that illuminates his strengths as a solo performer. Blending the echoed open-tuned guitar patterns of artists like John Martyn and Bert Jansch with the desolate American lyricism of lone riders like Simon Joyner and Elliott Smith, Cale continues to stand out as a songwriter of uncommon power.

The title *Blue Rider* refers to the passing of yesterday's vanguard, a group of painters that were known for their wild jagged color, but it also brings up the blues. Cale claims, "It's sort of like my "blues" record, I'm using the same tuning that Skip James used, or what Fahey called 'The Sphinx' tuning." And, with song titles such as "Hold Fast" and "Unfeeling" the reference is both musical and lyrical. The image of the bluesman or troubadour is an iconic one in the American psyche, and Cale plays with this image in a unique fashion upholding the idea that above all: the solo artist lives as a servant to song.

Blue Rider was written and recorded between tours of the U.S. and Europe in 2011-2012. Life on the road informs the album's eight songs which convey both the solitude of touring, and the

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excitement of the unknown. Lyrically the songs stray from a traditional verse-chorus-verse scheme, and instead are broken down into musical sections wherein flashes of images are placed, suggesting a sense of movement in both narrative and structure. “Hangman Letters”, with it’s breathless phrasing tells of a storm coming with the lyric “Shadows walk across a jagged sky / Lightning strikes this heart I hold / My blood is boiling now / For I am the only sound.”

Musically Cale incorporates a highly syncopated rhythm in his playing blending the melodic Piedmont picking technique of Pre-War country blues players like Mississippi John Hurt and Blind Willie McTell with the two-step rhythm of Buck Owens and Merle Haggard. “Wayward Son” and “Hold Fast” are great examples of this complex style. The songs were recorded by Matt Boynton (Kurt Vile, MGMT, Bat for Lashes) and are fleshed out with electric textures and analog synthesizers which lend a cosmic effect to the performances. This forward thinking approach to roots music is what Cale has been driving at since he started. ---
zacharycale.bandcamp.com

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