

Northeast Performer
January 2007

“Misplaced Americans” Review

Given the fact that singer/songwriter Matt Quarterman lived in Portugal, the Ukraine, and Mississippi before relocating to Boston to study at Berklee, it’s surprising to discover that the music on his new EP, *Misplaced Americans*, isn’t the “Son House howling accordion covers of Amália-Rodrigues” one might expect, but actual straightforward roots and folk rock. There’s a touch of the eclectic, courtesy of an occasional mandolin flourish, accordion intro, or electronic buzz, but otherwise, *Americans* is simply pleasant singer/songwriter fare.

The soft and lyrically rich “Pushkin Street” is a perfect three-minute folk gem, complete with beautiful mandolin and cello sounds and lines like “Alex waits with Milton, Lord Byron and Keats.” It’s a poignant, vivid picture, and one that lingers far after it’s over. Elsewhere, the muffled drum beat and soft piano playing on “The Shore” meld perfectly with Quarterman’s moody lyrics and acoustic plucking, while the accordion intro to “Trapped” is absolutely breathtaking. Unfortunately, once the intro fades, things veer into a muck of melodramatic predictability a la *Seven Mary Three*.

“Radiohead Song,” [sic] by far the most musically creative track on the disc, is a peculiar experiment that straddles that infamous David St. Hubbins-inspired line between stupid and clever. Buried in layers of distortion, electronics, and polyrhythmic drums, Quarterman manages to weave almost a dozen Radiohead titles — and the chorus of “No Surprises” — into a four-minute story song about a dude battling a heavy bout of paranoia. It could have been a train wreck, but Quarterman saves it thanks to his creativity and sincerity.

When Quarterman snags the Songwriting degree he’s pursuing at Berklee, it should do nothing less than further expand his talent. In the meantime, the eight tracks on the *Misplaced Americans* EP show the early stages of a very promising singer/songwriter. In the future, hopefully he will further use the music from his eclectic past to distinguish himself in a seemingly endless pool of singer/songwriters. (Republic Music)

-Brett Cromwell