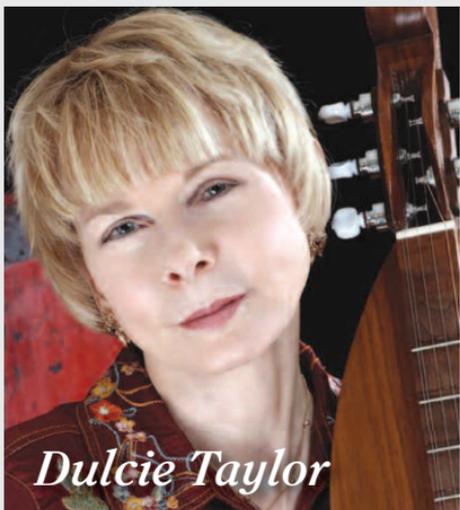


Natural-Born Beauties



Dulcie Taylor

Only Worn One Time (Mesa/Bluemoon) by singer/songwriter **Dulcie Taylor & Friends** is a beautifully crafted 11-track credo of personal proportions. She writes from the heart. Filled with provocative imagery, universal sentiment and hopeful (yet oftentimes sad) story-songs, her folksy Americana comes to the fore with the help of some master instrumentalists. California-based by way of South Carolina and Washington DC, she writes 'em like she sees 'em, or, better yet, like she feels 'em, since auto-biography is her stock-in-trade. It's her fourth and it seems she's reached that sweet spot where it all coalesces into a superior whole: guitars, bass, percussion, organ, violin, mandolin, accordion and lap top steel. Depending upon the track, it all swirls incessantly underneath an earthy mix that makes sure to accentuate every nuance of her warm and inviting vocals. The over-all effect gives off a back-porch vibe of total effortlessness, which is ironic since, to get a sound like this, not only great effort but great talent is required. This is the kind of CD to listen to alone, maybe when life gets to be too damn much. It'll make you feel better. Earthy, acoustic, countrified, *Only Worn One Time* is a rare message-in-a-bottle floating in a sea of 2014 country mediocrity.

So here I am all damn week grouching, complaining, being totally obnoxious and telling everybody who'll listen that all the blues and jazz CDs I've been getting of late are great and all the country music is crap. Enough already! Regular readers of this space might be tired at this point of me constantly harping on just how awful commercial country is. It's at the point now where if you totally suck, yet maintain some vestige of telegenic marketability, you'll get on TV and radio will spread its legs for you. Just redo some over-baked Fleetwood Mac and you'll have an instant audience no matter how clichéd or vapid (or un-country) you might be. Then just sit there and count your money...because it's only a fraction of what the suits are making. (I call it the Blake and Miranda Effect.)

I can't help but think of Willie Nelson, ostracized at one point by Nashville so much that they ran him out of town to set up shop in Austin. That's like kicking Shakespeare out of Stratford-upon-Avon. And he put it all in the words of a song worth repeating here.

"You call us heathens with zero respect for the law/
We're only songwriters just writing our songs and that's all/
We write what we live and we live what we write is that wrong?"

If you think it is Mr. Music Executive/
Why don't you write your own songs?

"And don't listen to mine, they might run you crazy/
They might make you dwell on your feelings a moment too long/
We're making you rich and you're already lazy/
So just lay on your ass and get richer or write your own songs."

"Mr. Purified Country don't you know what the whole thing's about?
Is your head up your ass so far that you can't pull it out?
The world's getting smaller and everyone in it belongs/
And if you can't see that Mr. Purified Country/
Why don't you just write your own songs?"

—Willie Nelson,
EMI Music Publishing, 2008

This is why when I hear the honest, universal sentiment of a true artist like Dulcie Taylor, I may go a little overboard in extolling her virtues. I feel the same way about **The Roys**. God, they're good. They should be the ones hosting stupid TV singing contests and making a fortune. But we all know life ain't fair and neither is Nashville. These siblings take that back-porch rootsiness and make it their own personal artform to the point of posing for their publicity pic on a porch with one great vista of sky and greenery behind them. It's a perfect metaphor for their music. And it makes for a perfect CD title.

Like a clear mountain stream or an uncloudy day, the music on *The View* is, in a word, breathtaking. If there's any justice, the aptly-named Rural Rhythm Records will have a hit on its hands. You don't harmonize and sound like this without growing up together and coming out of the same womb. The Everly Brothers had it. So did the Osborne Brothers, Carter Family, Delmore Brothers, Stanley Brothers, Louvin Brothers and Smothers Brothers (I might be stretching it with Tommy and Dickey but they were funny and growing up, I never missed their TV show).

But I digress. Point is, I stopped what I was doing for both Dulcie and these Roys and sat there mesmerized literally watching the music pour out of my speakers. My wife, who's a fifth and sixth grade music teacher, stopped grading papers, came upstairs, and said, "What is this beautiful folk music you're listening to?" And she's right. Transcending genre, this is music that should be passed down from generation to generation like Woody and Cisco and Rambling Jack.

It's just prettier.



The Roys