## PRESS AND REVIEWS

## SHADOWLAND-JOHNNY STEINBERG





## JOHNNY STEINBERG SHADOWLAND \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Self-released

Realising dreams in the best possible way

Eight years ago, Norfolk based Johnny Steinberg had just left his job. In the spare time that he had in-between work,

he started songwriting and taught himself a technical finger-style of guitar. Five years later, he was recording his own music in studios in both the US and the UK as he set about making his musical dream a reality. It goes to show that anyone can get into music if you want it enough and that's what Steinberg has done - however, he isn't just here to make up the numbers on his debut album, oh no. What Steinberg has done is compile a very strong compilation of songs - all of which have been produced very well - and unleashed them into the world. He more than stands his ground and worked with Kira Small (Willie Nelson/Martina McBride/Garth Brooks) and Boo Hewerdine (State of the Union/The Bible) to make his dream a reality. We can't wait for the next

Rob Ramsey www.facebook.com/ JohnnySteinbergMusic



## PRESS AND REVIEWS

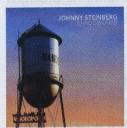
## SHADOWLAND—JOHNNY STEINBERG

#### JOHNNY STEINBERG



#### **Shadowland**

(OWN LABEL) www.johnnysteinberg.com



By his own admission, Johnny Steinberg sleepwalked into a musical career in 2011 when he became a producer at a Norwich

studio. He started writing songs, became an expert at procrastination, and eventually made this, his debut album.

Steinberg's songs are concise, imaginative pieces with strong melodies and some great hooks and choruses. Influenced by both Americana and folk, the overall feel is quite poppy and very accessible. Johnny's slightly world-weary voice is augmented by female vocal harmonies from the wonderful Kira Small and others. He switches between guitars and keyboards, and gets excellent instrumental support from joint producers Boo Hewerdine and Chris Pepper, plus Mark Jolley and more.

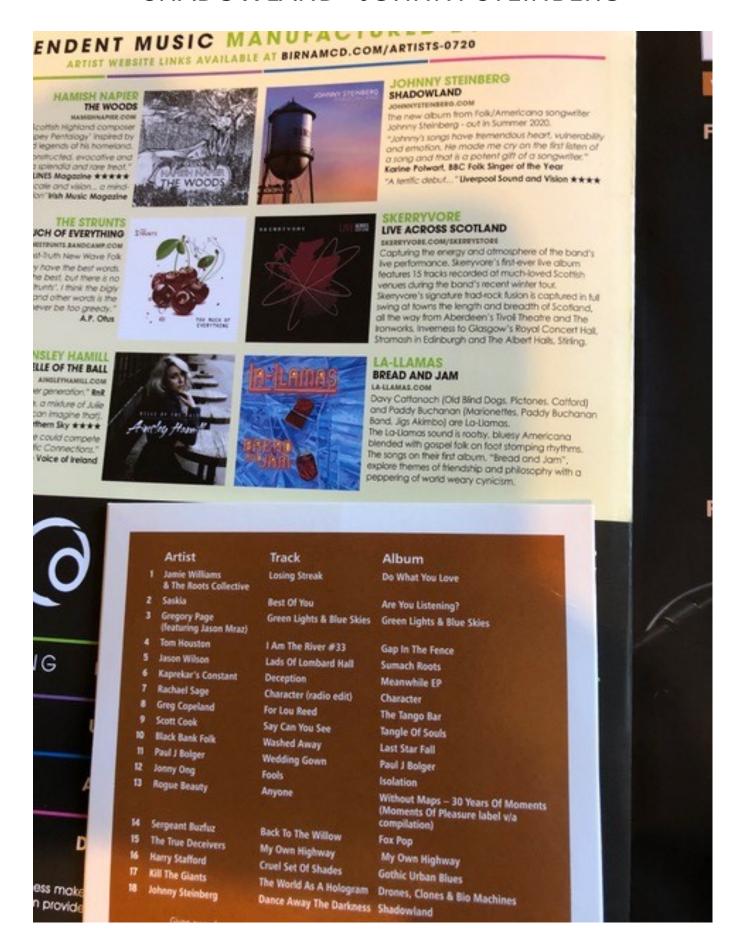
Among the songs, 'New York Tooth And Claw' tells of life as it really is, 'this is not hate, this is experience'. 'Carrie' is looking for a way out, 'to a place where she can shine', with some great sax from John Temple. 'Man On Wire' is about chasing your outrageous dreams, but 'don't look down' when you're on the high wire. Best of all is 'Shadow Of A Man' who returns from army duty in Afghanistan 'destined for oblivion'.

Shadowland reeks of quality, and given that it's a belated debut, it's a rather pleasant surprise.

Ian Crof

## PRESS AND REVIEWS

### SHADOWLAND—JOHNNY STEINBERG



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#### SINGER-SONGWRITER

melting haw frost, while the lyrics coldly inhabit the frozen earth; the singer's crystal-pure tones adding to the icy landscape. And yet, on 'Air And Light' they are just that — an angelic musing on curtains of light bursting through the clouds and hanging in the misty air.

There is a melancholy that infuses the songs yet there's no maudlin wallowing in either writing or performance. The mood, rather, speaks to the ancient majesty of the landscape which has inspired it; unchanging over eons yet carved by the elements themselves.

Trevor Raggatt

#### MICHAEL McMILLAN

#### ★★★ Whisky

(OWN LABEL) www.michaelmcmillanmusic.com



Glaswegian singersongwriter Michael McMillan has led a somewhat colourful career to date. From learning

highland bagpipes as a youngster, he ran away to London at sixteen, playing in the city with various bands before returning home, and performing in the last eighteen months or so in the U.S.A. as well as the U.K.

Whisky is his sixth album and opens with the title track, a poignant tale of a man's battle with the bottle, told over an understated yet insistent riff. It's the daily dramas of existence, relationships, family and the not-so-little questions of life and why we're here that inform Whisky. The subtly effective 'All About You', the straight-talking of 'Another Highway', and the sad beauty of 'Until We Meet Again' stand as fine testaments to McMillan's craft.

Accompanying himself mainly on acoustic guitar, with atmospheric and sensitive keyboards, mandolin and extra guitar on occasion, the album calls out for a bit of a harder edge though the Laurel Canyon/Eagles-lite vibe does, in the main, suit his compositions. The reflective nature that prevails throughout suggests that most listeners will be able to relate to many of the sentiments expressed on Whisky's fifteen tracks, and that's as good an entry point as any.

Steve Caseman

## OUR MAN IN THE FIELD

## The Company Of Strangers (ROCKSNOB) www.omitf.bandcamp.com



The atmospheric songs on this debut from Our Man In The Field (aka songwriter Alexander Ellis)

demonstrate his uncanny ability to get to the heart of the subject matter, whether that's the heartbreak of 'Easy Going Smile' or the beautiful declaration of love of 'Eleanor's Song'.

Recorded live in the studio, there's a warmth to this album thanks to Ellis's weary vocals (think Ray LaMontagne) and the sympathetic contributions of double bassist Tom Rosenfeld, drummer Greg Bishop and, especially, pedal-steel player Henry Senior who adds a whole palette of colour to Ellis's songs.

While some numbers are clearly based on observation, including 'It Was Ever So', a slice of social history recounting the impact of the abrupt closure of London's Clerkenwell Fire Station, others are more ambiguous suggesting that they're drawn, at least in part, from experience. Whether Ellis has a personal connection to, say, 'Thin (I Used To Be Bulletproof)'

and 'It Is What It Is', we may never know but they reveal him to be a gifted songwriter and storyteller.

For the most part laid-back, low-key and mellow, there's an occasional gear shift, with 'Swansong (Don't Play With Matches)' driven by syncopated drums, and 'I Like You So I'll Kill You Last' centred on a skewed blues harmonica, bringing The Company Of Strangers to an enjoyable conclusion.

Dave Haslam

#### **SCOTT COOK**

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#### Tangle Of Souls (OWN LABEL) www.scottcook.bandcamp.com



There is a particular quality lodged in the Canadian soul. There are the obvious commercial giants, who happen to have been some

of the planet's greatest songwriters, and there is an army of less-celebrated artists who roam the globe, taking full advantage of their own rich traditions, yet pushing forms along, with what seems at once a characteristic verve and restraint.

Scott Cook has produced a wonderful little artefact here; a musically interesting and versatile album, tucked into the back of a thick volume of prose impressions and reminiscences (commonly known these days, I guess, as a blog) with graceful illustrations and enlivening photographs, transcriptions, and more. The fact that his musings are often conversational, riddled with cliché and in need of editing, is neither here nor there.

His heart, as they say, is entirely in the right place, he is intelligent and erudite, and it is a constant pleasure to hear him 'meet his doubts every day' while he avers that we 'need a revolutionary change in the way our societies are structured'. His songs and tunes are equally genuine and affecting. Sometimes to be most fully human is to be exposed exactly in this way.

Nick Burbridge

#### WILLIE CAMPBELL

#### Nothing's Going To Bring Me Down



rested, spawning two albums under his own name, in addition to releases with his band Astrid.

Nothing's Going To Bring Me Down has had a difficult gestation, its intended recording scuppered by lockdown, but with

#### INSIGHT

By his own admission, Johnny Steinberg sleepwalked into a career in music in 2011 after a lifetime working in education. Now, at last, he's released his first album, Shadowland, and it's so impressive, I rang him at his home in Norfolk for a chat. "I was in school bands as a drummer," Johnny begins. "One of our guitarists later played with Saxon. I then had paid gigs as a drummer in the north of England, but didn't like the cigarette smoke in venues and gave up; that was 1981."

He dabbled with guitar and songwriting, making a single, 'Beirut', which had some radio play, but he was soon done with music and trained to be a teacher. "In 2010, they offered me redundancy. My friend Strummer had recently died on his sixtieth birthday, and it made me re-evaluate what I wanted to do with my life. I told my wife I was going to follow my dream, so took the redundancy and some money for retraining."

Johnny used the money to sign up for mentoring weeks with two favourite songwriters, Ray Davies and Chris Difford. "It was a steep learning curve but Ray and Chris were brilliant, and I decided that it was what I wanted to do. I've always been good with words, prose and poetry, and it was a natural step from that. I went to a U.K. Songwriters Festival at Bath University, with lots of really good people. That's where I met Boo Hewerdine and we got on really well. He was very supportive."

Johnny didn't want to rush into an album though. "I'd seen so many who'd deluded themselves they were any good, and weren't prepared to put the effort in to get better. I was reluctant to release a CD to become a bird scarer in somebody's garden. My goal was just to play — it didn't enter my mind to make an album until someone said I needed product to generate bookings, but I kept putting it off."

Having been very impressed by Gretchen Peters's album *Blackbirds*, Johnny went over to Nashville for a mentoring session. "This was 2016 and Blackbird Studio was just round the corner. They had a cancellation so offered me a good rate and I booked two days. A friend of a friend, [singer] Kira Small, came and worked on a few songs with me. I particularly love the track 'Jesus In Shades' where I wanted a gospel choir and Kira created it for me, all by herself."

He brought five recordings back, which Hewerdine liked and convinced Johnny to make an album. Boo agreed to produce it in conjunction with Chris Pepper. They kept the Nashville recordings – though on one they retained just Kira Small's vocals and re-recorded the rest – and added another five tracks. Can he pick out a couple of favourites?

"The track 'Set Sail And Go' is about my friend Strummer who died before he could follow his musical dreams. In my song, two people are getting a boat up and it doesn't work out for one of them. I owe so much to Strummer. 'Shadow Of A Man' came from chatting to a man whose friend had come back from Afghanistan and committed suicide. I ended up

finding out about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD] and playing gigs for a charity called Combat Stress. The song was based on that."

Keen to get back playing, post-lockdown, Johnny has already started writing for a new album, "...probably slightly rockier and bluesy, maybe recording some of it in Cuba." He's also writing for a spoken-word/instrumental project, Edgelands, inspired by the work of Robert Macfarlane. Johnny Steinberg has clearly given up on procrastination.

lan Croft

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#### Fatea magazine 26 JULY 2020

#### Johnny Steinberg Album: Shadowland Label: Self Released Tracks: 10/10

"We are so scared of being judged that we look for every opportunity to procrastinate." This quote appears in the introductory sleeve note to Johnny Steinberg's debut album 'Shadowland' and is attributed to Erica Jong. It sets out the course for this well-crafted album with its themes of moving on, riding the current and working life out. The upbeat opening track 'Holding On' makes good use of simple and effective percussion launching us into the rough and readiness of track two 'New York Tooth and Claw': "these are not scars these are souvenirs". Travel and movement feature heavily and in track three we hear how Pamela runs from the reality of life "spin the wheel and take the drive". A change of pace brings 'Set Sail and Go' whilst 'Dance Away the Darkness' talks of moving through the night "We'll keep on keeping on" to avoid the darkness. In 'Carrie' the protagonist is "looking for a way out" before she finally hits the road. 'Man on Wire' brings dreams of flight whilst in the final track 'England' contemplates the need once again for "moving on".

'Shadowland' presents a series of stories, where some journeys are welcome and many less so. It is hard to know whether these reflect Steinberg's own experiences of journeying (at the time of writing his website was not available) although the sleeve notes hint at travel with recording credits in Nashville, Denmark and the UK. Nonetheless a number of the songs feel incredibly intimate; Steinberg's unique vocal is speech-like and the lyrics so heartfelt it feels impossible they were written by anyone who didn't experience the events.

Exceptions to the theme of journeys are 'Jesus in Shades' about a profound, drink influenced event and 'Man on Wire' with its intriguing lyric "You're breathing like a Buddhist in a dentist's chair". These more sedentary moments suggest a need to find a space and perspective in an otherwise turbulent existence - instances of optimism when "Your wild outrageous dream, comes through" living for the moment because "In the long run, there's no long run".

With Boo Hewerdine as his "wing man" (sleeve notes) this album was perhaps a predictable success from the first stages of recording tracks in Nashville in 2016 through its long journey to completion. Commended by one of my favourite songwriters Karine Polwart, it didn't take long to identify which track might have "made [her] cry on the first listen". I could hear Hewerdine's influence in the piano accompaniment for 'Set Sail and Go' and whilst Hewerdine contributed a number of instrumental parts to the recording, on this track the piano was performed by Steinberg himself. The rhythmic guitar parts on 'Hey Now Pamela' and 'Carrie' are attributed to Hewerdine and the unexpected chord patterns on 'Carrie' which kept me guessing are reminiscent of Hewerdine's style.

#### Fatea magazine 26 JULY 2020

#### Johnny Steinberg Album: Shadowland Label: Self Released Tracks: 10/10

Each track benefits from its own emotive treatment and this album certainly avoids repetition with each adding something different to the whole. Magic moments for me include the fluttering strings (contributed by Gustaf Ljunggren) at a poignant moment on 'Set Sail and Go', the swirling lap steel guitar (also Gustaf Ljunggren), the relentless fiddle hook (from the versatile Mark Jolley who also contributes bass guitar to the album) on 'Dance Away the Darkness', and the syncopated saxophone (from John Temple) on 'Carrie' instilling a sense of calm and optimism. Backing vocals are provided by Kira Small which is an inspired collaboration, with Kate Heaton and Carole Lea also making contributions on a couple of tracks.

Storytelling lies at the heart of each of Steinberg's songs and there are no formulas. Deliberate use of internal rhymes and partial-rhymes ensure the lyrics flow seamlessly. For me 'Shadowland' offers more than the average 'singer-songwriter' album because of its thematic cohesive nature and its masterful engineering which combines simple acoustic instruments (for example the piano driven 'England') and tight backing vocals with synthetic instruments such as the 'electric digital-delay banjo' on 'Hey Now Pamela'.

This is an album for listeners. Despite its powerful honesty and courageously personal offerings ('Shadow of a Man' is notable for its uneasy absence of resolution) there's no self-indulgence. The stories are intricately formed with a scattering of detail but enough space to invite interpretation. The most hard hitting moment "It's like your hand's on the tiller and life brought you back" ('Set Sail and Go') is as extreme in its sincerity as any I have felt when listening to a recording. This debut must surely propel Steinberg to greater notoriety.

Louise Jordan

## JOHNNY STEINBERG SHADOWLAND



## THE NEW ALBUM OUT NOW CD/DIGITAL

"Johnny's songs have tremendous heart, vulnerability and emotion. He's made me cry on the first listen of a song and that is a potent gift as a songwriter."

**KARINE POLWART** 

BBC FOLK SINGER OF THE YEAR

JOHNNYSTEINBERG.COM

There have been some excellent new Americana releases dropping through my letterbox and into my CD player these past few

months. **Shadowland** by **Johnny Steinberg** is no exception. With a name like that, songs that tell tales of heartbreak, cheap whiskey and Jesus, not to mention some deliciously effortless musicianship that just seems to ooze Nashville, I was somewhat surprised to learn that Mr Steinberg hails not from Nashville but from Norfolk. What surprised me even more, however, was learning that Shadowland is, in fact, Steinberg's debut album.

Outstanding songs, exquisitely well-played and beautifully sung this album radiates such class that I'm still getting my head around the fact it's a debut album.

People in Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg can now get Johnny Steinberg's music at Xango Music Benelux.

" 'Shadowland' by Johnny Steinberg, songs that tell tales of heartbreak, cheap whiskey and Jesus, not to mention some deliciously effortless musicianship that just seems to ooze Nashville. Steinberg's heartwarming story of his journey to Nashville and how he came to record an album with the likes of Boo Hewerdine and Kira Small and other brilliant musicians is recounted in the extensive booklet that accompanies the beautifully packaged CD. He is thoroughly deserving the wider attention this album will surely bring him. Shadowland is pure class from start to finish."

https://www.xangomusic.com/

## **OUTLINE MAGAZINE 01/11/2020**

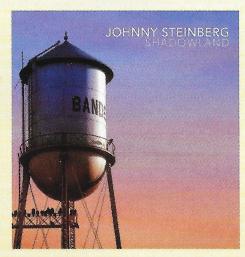
Norfolk-based Yorkshireman and singer-songwriter Johnny Steinberg has created a very fine, independently released album. Immediately upon first listening one is struck by the impressive, professional level of performance and production but especially the level of songwriting which draws in and holds the listener from the off and throughout the album.

In an acoustic, Americana-influenced style the songs describe the world observed through experienced and compassionate eyes. These are of people, places, events and moods. Johnny has an expressive, kindly-sounding voice which can only belong to someone who sees and feels things deeply. I know he's a big fan of Neil Young and one can sometimes detect this in the songs but the imagery of some of the songwriting is as evocative of such other poetic musical gods as Cave and Cohen.

Johnny has taken us along with him to share a stretch of his own Lost Highway which is as much observed England in a Kinks-Squeeze way as it is Americana, as one might expect with it being recorded in both countries. It's a feat of some magnificent songwriting which deserves to be heard. One always feels words from the heart and these songs have feeling, integrity, honesty and compassion in abundance. Recorded at the Blackbird Studios, Nashville and also at Saltwell Studio and Motherlode Studio in the UK Shadowland was produced by Boo Hewerdine, Chris Pepper and Johnny Steinberg. Musicians appearing on the album include: Kira Small, Boo Hewerdine, Mark Jolley, Chris Pepper, Kate Heaton, Carol Lea, Gustaf Ljunggren, Philip Lewis-Jones, John Temple, Pat Dam Smyth, and Ernesto Olivera.

Johnny can sometimes be found playing gigs locally, either solo or accompanied by his band The Blue Fish. I first encountered Johnny at West Norfolk Radio, I enjoyed his set and our chat afterwards. He told me about his song Man on Wire, inspired by the documentary film of Philippe Petit who made a highwire walk between the Twin Towers of New York in 1974. The track appears here on Shadowland.

#### **Richard Shashasame**



#### **JOHNNY STEINBERG**

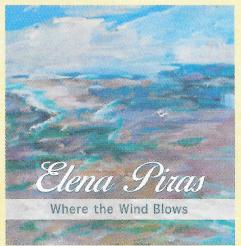
#### SHADOWLAND

JOHNNYSTEINBERG.COM

Folk/Americana from songwriter Johnny Steinberg
"Shadowland reeks of quality" RnR Magazine \*\*\*
"A strong compilation of his songs, produced very
well" Mayerick Magazine 7/10

"This album must surely propel Steinberg to greater notoriety" **Fatea Magazine** 

"Terrific debut!" Liverpool Sound and Vision ★★★★



#### **ELENA PIRAS**

#### WHERE THE WIND BLOWS

ELENAPIRAS.COM

Where the Wind Blows is the long awaited new album by award winning singer and musician Elena Piras. The album is a collection of beautiful, traditional Scottish and Gaelic melodies and works by artists including Sting and Tom Paxton.

"With hints of Joni Mitchell, Elena draws together these musical connotations in a refreshing and organic way." Amy Flynn, University of Leeds





Committed to the Fire

## FELICITY BUIRSKI COMMITTED TO THE FIRE

FELICITYBUIRSKI.COM

Felicity's spiritual journey from illusion to light continues with this third album of "Wayfarer".

"A magnificent album; a rallying cry to find light in the darkness." **Mike Davies, Folking.com** 

Her debut, Repairs & Alterations, won Which HiFi & Music CD Awards 1989 Best Folk Album and after Prince, Most Innovative Performer with Peter Gabriel.

New York: Giuliani cleaned the streets/but he couldn't clean the lies. Mooi album, prachtig hoesje ook (Birnam/XMD ���☆).

Johnny Steinberg deed een masterclass songwriting bij Gretchen Peters, wat hij trots vermeldt in het boekje bij zijn deels in Nashville opgenomen debuutalbum SHADOWLAND. Een mooie song is New York Tooth And Claw, waarin onder meer Giuliani voorkomt, die rare, als advocaat in Trumpiaans vaarwater terecht gekomen oud-burgemeester van

Heaven
Music
Magazine Reviews
The Netherlands