

## **YOU SHOULD KNOW BY NOW**

*Lorrie Matheson*

*Western Famine Recordings, 2002*

I have to admit, when I first listened to the debut solo CD by former National Dust front man Lorrie Matheson, it didn't make much of an impression. A few weeks passed, and prompted by a colleague, I gave the disk another listen. I was hooked. As they say in the adult film industry, *You Should Know By Now* is a grower, not a show-er- and it's a recording with some serious cojones to boot. Now, after 60 or 70 plays, the disk is still revealing its subtle charms.

Matheson's hidden talent lies in his ability to turn a cliché inside out, coining clever phrases like "temporarily inane" and "love is blind, but its not deaf and dumb." I can think of only a few wordsmiths in contemporary pop music who have a similar wit: Elvis Costello, Jason Pierce (of Spiritualized) and Minneapolis's drunken poet laureate, Paul Westerberg, a long-time idol of our boy Matheson.

Matheson's equally adept at making riff-rock sound fresh. With contributions from accomplished Edmonton session players Greg Johnston (bass, synth), Stew Kirkwood (guitar) and Lyle Molzan (drums and percussion), *You Should Know By Now* amalgamates influences like the Replacements (Westerberg's old band), Buffalo Tom, New York Dolls, the Beatles and probably others I can't distinguish. (In his day job, Matheson presides over a used record store in Calgary, and so boasts an encyclopaedic knowledge of music history.) But the true beauty of this record is that it acknowledges its debts to its predecessors without declaring intellectual bankruptcy.

For every barroom blaster on the disk, there's a quiet introspective song, as Matheson wages a battle against predictability and artistic stagnation. His words resonate with the power of the best poetry, and they only sound better as more scotch goes down. Yet, for a recording immersed in themes of failure (missed opportunities, disastrous jobs, botched romances) and fear (of commitment and the unknown), it's oddly inspiring, too, giving hope to malcontents everywhere.

The album's coda is a song called "Finder's Keepers", in which Matheson sings, "You might find me misanthropic and mean / You might find a bastard of the likes you've never seen." It's the most potent song on the album, and the plaintive tone with which it's delivered makes its message clear: what's most important is that you find Matheson at all- and, with any luck, much more quickly than I did.

*Jaime Frederick- Alberta Views Magazine Jul/Aug 2003*