

Bridges and Backroads

CD: *Bridges and Backroads*

Artist: Jerry Salley

Label: Very Jerry Records

Artist Website: JerrySalley.com

Jerry Salley is a powerful songwriter and performer. On *Bridges and Backroads*, he gives us twelve of his songs, all penned with a variety of co-writers. He also manages to assemble an impressive band, including everyone's favorite bassist, Mike Bub. The background vocalists are an all-star cast: Carl Jackson, Val Storey, Larry Cordle, Rhonda Vincent, and others.

Jerry is at the top of Nashville's songwriting royalty, and he gives us quite a treat on this CD. The song list is:

- 1. Miss My Miss in Mississippi
- 2. Let Me Be the Bridge
- 3. I Take the Backroads
- 4. Waltz Through the Ages
- 5. You Can't Hear a Heartbreak
- 6. How I Want to Be Remembered
- 7. A Memory Like Mine
- 8. Be Better to Your Neighbor
- 9. Dyin' To Hold Her Again
- 10. Hillbilly Lilly
- 11. Without Forgiveness
- 12. Life To My Days

I listened to this several times (no kidding!), with the CD starting out big and getting bigger with each listen, until I now find myself humming the tunes and bursting out loud in a chorus or two of my favorites. This does not happen to me

much, anymore; I am thankful this CD brought it out of me.

My favorites:

Of course, the uptempo *Miss My Miss in Mississippi*, the first song, was destined to be one of my faves. How could I not like it? Every landmark mentioned, every road, every thought of getting home to my own Mississippi Miss might as well have come from my own life. I enjoyed the Osborne Brothers-esque vocal flourish at the end.

I Take The Backroads also tapped into my psyche. Backroads give every bit as much in views and memories as what they cost in travel time. I particularly enjoyed the banjo work of Greg "Papaw" Davis. Davis' banjo had just what I like in syncopated notes and fat tone.

Waltz Through The Ages, a beautiful duet with Rhonda Vincent, will bring a joyful tear to a glass eye.

You Can't Hear A Heartbreak would be a good selection for a single release. It is a medium tempo Bluegrass ballad that should smoothly transition to other genres. Once again, "Papaw" Davis' banjo got my attention, along with some beautiful fiddle work from Jason Roller.

A Memory Like Mine, co-written with my friend Jim McBride, is a dark ballad of pain and hurt. Some memories are painful, but inescapable. The background vocals are beautifully haunting. "The truth never changes and the past never dies, when you've got a memory lie mine." I know a good line when I hear one.

Be Better To Your Neighbor is a straight ahead bluegrass tune, and calls to mind the Louvin's *If You Don't Love Your Neighbor Then You Don't Love God*; that is a good thing. You want better neighbors? Be a better neighbor. The banjo playing of Aaron McDaris got my attention this time; his tone and touch had me thinking Sonny Osborne, which should make any banjo player smile a big smile.

Hillbilly Lilly, had to grow on me, but it grew and grew until I think now it might just be my overall favorite song on the CD. At first, I found it downright disturbing. I don't know what changed other than I acquired a taste for its musical complexity. *Hillbilly Lilly* the person is as complex as the arrangement. There are great instrumental segues on this song. I find myself "Hey", "Ho", and "Yeahing" as I walk up the path from my studio to the house, as I bush-hog through overgrown pastures on hot August days, even as I write this. It is a powerful song. If it seems too in-your-face at first listen, give it another. I did. It won me over.

I first heard *Without Forgiveness* when my niece's husband, Jason Davidson, recorded it for his own remarkable Gospel/Contemporary Christian CD, *He Came Searching For Me*, in 2017. I liked it then, I still like it now. This is a powerful song. When Jason played the song for me prior to the CD release, I asked him who wrote it. When he told me, I said, "That's some powerful songwriting talent." That was not an overstatement.

Life To My Days is the song I most find myself singing, for a variety of reasons. Jerry Salley may have saved the best for last.

Hmmm. That's nine favorites out of twelve songs. I like the other three, too. I reckon the thing to say is that this is a fine piece of work, including the engineering, recording, mixing, and mastering. As is my habit, I put it on to play loud through my studio monitors just to see if I could find audio anomaly I could complain about. There were no complaints from me; none. My wife has her own stained glass studio in the same building as me, separated by a dog run bay in between us. My Mississippi Miss complained that I had the music way too loud.

Spoil Sport.

Mississippi Chris Sharp

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mississippichris@bellsouth.net