



Will Johnson Vultures Await

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NOT EXPORTABLE TO EUROPE

That Will Johnson is a powerful and prolific songwriter is not up for debate. Over the past eight years, Will has proven himself a veritable magnet for critical and peer affection; the words "cult following" tend to hover near any description of either his folk-pop juggernaut, Centro-Matic, or its gray-skied cousin, South San Gabriel. Johnson is the author of a staggering 10 full-length albums between those two bands and his solo project (*Murder of Tides*, his solo debut, was released in 2002), and each is a unique statement, holding its own within a catalogue easily placed alongside those of **Uncle Tupelo** or the **Drive By-Truckers**, **Neil Young** or the **Replacements**.

Johnson's solo songs are simply stunning. Like *Murder of Tides*, *Vultures Await* carries the darkness absent in Johnson's other projects, but it is not just somber - an underlying hopefulness flows through these songs. Stark vocal melodies cut a swath to Appalachia, ghosts of roadhouse barmen backing up against **Flannery O'Connor**; these are interwoven throughout piano ballads, acoustic elegies and, occasionally, fully fleshed-out pop songs that carry the seamless, rough emotion of a Southern literary genius.

Consider the creative ingenuity that went into the finest winning streaks in rock and roll history: **Van Morrison '67-'72**, **Springsteen '75-'82**, **Costello '77-'84**. Now consider that Johnson has recently hit such a stride, rendering his most intimate, visceral and personal work to date. Recalling at times the haunted nostalgia of *Plastic Ono Band* or the glorious wrecked majesty of **Nilsson's Pussy Cats**, *Vultures Await* is testimony that a truly daunting talent suddenly fully blooming.

Like **Springsteen's Nebraska**, *Vultures Await* begins with an account of a crime and its aftermath. In this case--"Catherine Dupree"--it is arson, committed at a university by a female anti-hero. It is an act easily interpreted in either the literal or metaphorical. Johnson paints an individual driven to drastic measures in an effort to break free from a life of false promise, unedifying scholarship, and unwilling indoctrination into a society of numbing convention. Though the aura conjured is one of tremendous sadness, Johnson lightens the atmosphere with his trademark wit: "It was widely reported that Catherine Dupree/ Had sought some revenge for her faulty degree." These are the characters that inhabit *Vultures Await*: A united front of unlikely protagonists intent on refuting the values of a rapidly devolving society. Often, for Will's characters, there is a terrible price pay for this solidarity of theme. On the title track, Johnson sings, "I heard you tried to call today/ While I tried to make my great escape." The narrator does not know where he is going, but he knows he is going alone, and in the distance he sees birds of prey circling.

Later, on "Just Some Silence," the gauntlet is thrown down; having examined the proposition of a lifetime of muted boredom and unfulfilling exertion, the narrator decides, "The worst thing to do was just accept it/ With no reservations, just some silence/ It was an evil routine, an old exhaustion." These are the stories of people courageous enough to follow **Bob Dylan's** famous advice, "it is not he or she or them or it that you belong to."

Then there is the voice.

The world is filled with trained vocalists, but there are a very few singing voices which convey a particular sense of raw emotion so immediate as to be simultaneously transporting, arresting and a little unsettling. **John Lennon**, **Joni Mitchell**, **Roscoe Holcomb**, **Paul Westerberg** and **Billie Holiday**--these are singers who fit this description--and this is the sort of voice Will Johnson is gifted with. It is a matter for speculation as to whether or not the immense depth of Johnson's material might be conveyed by a less passionate, extraordinary singer. Fortunately this is not a question that requires examination in this instance. Desperate times in our society have already yielded some dividends in our culture, and 2004 has already seen the release of some extraordinary music. But none will prove so indispensable as *Vultures Await*, an album poised to stand the test of time as an extraordinary record of its time and place.

Selling Points:

US tours planned from early September through December, including stints opening for **Drive By Truckers, **American Music Club**, **John Vanderslice** and **My Morning Jacket**

***Centro-matic's previous effort *Love You Just the Same* was a huge hit in the press, including an appearance on *Rolling Stone's Hot List*, features in *Devil in the Woods*, *Harp*, *Rockpile*, *Ghettoblaster*, many 2003 best-of accolades and dozens of reviews

This is **Album Number 10 from Will Johnson, an accomplishment sure to garner attention in the press

Press campaign by **Nasty Little Man

ALSO AVAILABLE:

MSR20 Centro-matic Love You Just the Same

MSR22 Centro-matic Flashes and Cables EP

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