

HANS CHEW

★★★★

Life & Love

(AT THE HELM) www.hanschew.com



Tennessean singer-pianist Hans Chew's imagery, the press release to this his second album tells us, concerns 'the creation and rise of civilisation, temptation from across the railroad tracks, the cool hand of the goddess of mercy, a marriage between a nymph and the son of Zebedee [and] the ripping open of space and time ...'

Wow, sounds phenomenal, but unfortunately Chew has a thin, strained voice and, frustratingly given their apparently serious intent, I just couldn't make many of the lyrics out, despite repeated plays. (I'm working from an advance promotional copy with no information. If the actual release has a lyric sheet, that would obviously help – but shouldn't be necessary.)

Musically, however, the album is terrific. On the melodic 'Chango',

for example, the band is spin-on-a-dime tight while on 'Love', when the band takes off and the guitars soar exhilaratingly, I almost had an Allman Brothers moment.

In addition to the original songs, 'Tom Hughes Town' is a rewrite of Lead Belly's 'Mr. Tom Hughes' Town' (aka 'Fannin Street') while the New Orleans standard 'Junker's Blues' features Chew's expert piano and characteristically great Dave Cavallo guitar.

Trevor Hodgett

R2 Rock'n'Reel May June 2014