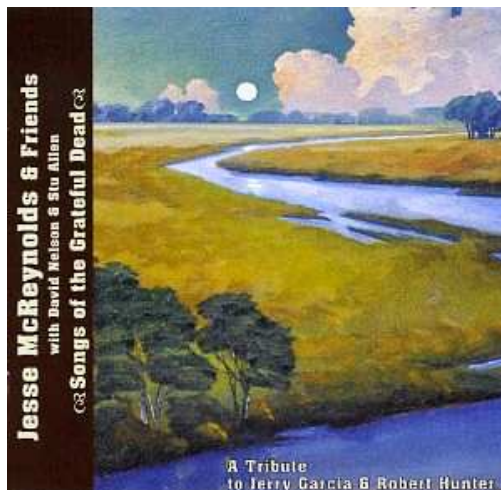


FAME Review: Jesse McReynolds & Friends - Songs of the Grateful Dead



Songs of the Grateful Dead

[Jesse McReynolds & Friends](#)

Woodstock Records - WR 33

Available from [Woodstock Records](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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Though this is properly a tribute to one of America's greatest bands, I will assert that it's simultaneously a loving enshrinement of roots music's period, particularly the Appalachian. Jesse McReynolds is the sort of gent the term 'legend' was coined for, a guy recognized along with pre-eminent names like Bill Monroe and Willie Nelson. And what Jerry Garcia and the boys were shooting for in their own drug-dazed brilliant way, McReynolds has been living much more straightly for a very long time, all his life. He, it must be emphasized, sits irremovably in among the progenitors Garcia, Hunter, Weir, and all the many others associated with the Haight Ashbury wonders sat in awe of, providing the spark for why they did what they did.

Ironically, *Songs of the Grateful Dead* is much more faithful to the Dead's wellsprings than the band itself has been. Nonetheless, the harmony vocals in the opening bars for "The Wheel" will cause a sharp intake of breath, grandson Garrett McReynolds chiming in for a note-perfect Dead keen. Jesse's encanting is just as skillful, direct, and completely unpretentious, a matter of deep respect coupled with a love for the mode and its history. And, man, that mando he plays!, a direct brother to Garcia's ways and means. This shouldn't be surprising, though, as McReynolds has been noted for his innovations and cutting edge for well over four decades, and a man still ahead of his time. The guy conveys so damn much without resorting to pyrotechnics that one is reminded of the virtues of nuance and subtlety in very sharp contrast indeed. Yes, he **is** capable of lightning speed, as several asides illustrate, but what the picker imbues a single note with must be heard to be believed. Chet Atkins had to have loved this cat.

Songs makes the Dead's repertoire new again and several cuts are extended in concord with the San Fran band's wont. David Nelson from The New Riders of the Purple Sage joins in, and Robert Hunter was so enthusiastic that he not only lent his seal of approval but wrote a brand new cut with McReynolds. Good heavens, what more do ya need to know? Nothin'! Grab it, dig it, and, like me, sit entranced and reflective. This is one of the most perfect confluences of the past and the present produced in the last 10 years.

Track List:

- Black Muddy River (Garcia / Hunter)
- Ripple (Garcia / Hunter)
- The Wheel (Garcia / Hunter)
- Bird Song (Garcia / Hunter)
- Franklin's Tower (Garcia / Hunter / Kreuzmann)
- Standing on the Moon (Garcia / Hunter)
- Loser (Garcia / Hunter)
- Fire on the Mountain (Hunter / Hart)
- Stella Blue (Garcia / Hunter)
- Deep Ellum Blues (traditional)
- Deal (Garcia / Hunter)
- Alabama Getaway (Garcia / Hunter)
- Day by Day (Hunter / McReynolds)

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