

# Heavenly country and patient grooves

by Carl Getto

The music of the Vancouver group The Blue Shadows confirms that country and western music in Canada ranks with the best that has come out of Tennessee. In fact, the Blue Shadows

and their lead singer Billy "Bud" Cowsill

**MUSIC**  
*The Blue Shadows*  
*On the Floor of Heaven*

sound more C & W than much of today's Nashville sound. In the group's

new CD *On the Floor of Heaven*, one finds the band more intent on capturing the sounds of various Nashville eras than on producing music for today's country/pop-style market.

Anyone familiar with the history of country and western will appreciate the Blue Shadows' effort to recognize the C & W tradition, one which consists of more than wearing a cowboy hat. In fact, C & W has a soulful tradition which Buddy Cowsill captures while echoing the singing style of Hank Locklin and Lefty Frizzell. The Blue Shadows are the shadow of this country tradition which consists, among other things, of vocally approaching the melody note with improvised grace notes. This style, as exemplified by Locklin and Frizzell, was influenced by bluegrass and the blues.

Hank Williams, country and western's most outstanding songwriter, certainly sang in this style. The name of the Blue Shadows thus seems to hold logic.

But this group is not a pre-1965 country clone band. While the country flavour is dominant, the group suggests a Bob Dylan influence in the song *If I Were You*, followed by *Think On It*, whose acoustic guitar groove reminds one of the Eagles.

As a whole the CD tries to show an eclectic collection of country styles while refusing to jump on the country/pop bandwagon of today.

**Patience**  
*Over the Rhine*

The compelling feature of this Ohio-based group is the showcasing of the

vocal style of Karin Bergquist (the spelling is correct), whose voice dominates the entire tape. Her singing style is the opposite of Melissa Ethridge's 'damn you this is how I feel' attitude; instead, hers is a voice softly floating among the clouds.

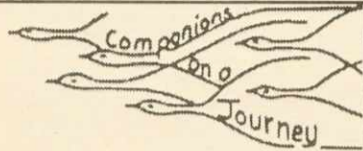
The band supports this ethereal effect well. Bergquist's fellow musicians, as the band's name might indicate, play quiet, gentle grooves. Whenever called upon to perform they seem to do so reluctantly, as if they prefer the motion of each cloud and song they are floating on. But these performers are smart enough, and have their egos under control, to know that playing fewer notes softly is more emotional than playing more notes loudly.

Throughout the tape one expects a shift of style when we hear a shrill guitar riff or a word sung harshly. The song *I Painted My Name* does give an aggressive groove with electric guitar riffs, but *Patience* generally provides fresh songs in its gentle way. The song *Grey Monologue* is a monologue of poetry while the drummer provides the only background, dusting his drums with brushes.

The song *Lullaby* rings with the sound of rain, soon joined by Bergquist's voice and the beating of congo drums.

The music is gentle with a spiritual quality. It can be listened to at breakfast or played for background music at dinner. The tape is enjoyable yet I refuse to label it with the questionable tag 'easy listening'.

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