

AmericanaUK Review: Darryl Holter's Crooked Hearts
by Paul Kerr July 13, 2012

Darryl Holter is a kindly looking grey haired gent whose appearance on his album cover might make you think he's the kind of guy who sings for his supper in folk clubs and cabarets. Well as the man said you can't judge a book by the cover and an initial listen to this album reveals a man who has a firm grasp on the American folk and protest tradition.

Although he's only been recording over the past few years, this his third album is a fine collection of self penned songs and a few covers performed in the manner of some grizzled veterans of the sixties. In particular it reminds one of Chip Taylor's recent releases and especially of the albums released by Bob Neuwirth in the eighties. Apt indeed as it turns out that Holter was a contemporary of Dylan and Neuwirth and attended the University of Minnesota and was a habitu» of the Dinkytown scene following the likes of Koerner, Ray and Glover. Although able to perform the contemporary song staples Holter went on to carve a career as a historian of left wing movements only returning to music as a fully-fledged grown up.
darryl holter uk

Able to deliver acoustic blues, country tinged rollicks and sensitive songwriterly musings its testament to his talent that he is able to garner guests such as Dave Alvin, Benmont Tench and Greg Leisz, Leisz in particular adorns the album with some fine pedal and lap steel playing. Opening with a tremendous version of Alvin's murder ballad "Mary Brown" Holter also covers Dylan's "Love Is a Four Letter Word" in a manner that is reminiscent of Phil Ochs while Richard Thompson's "Walking The Long Miles Home" gets a country makeover. Of his own songs "Rue Du Pont Au Chou" is a magisterial piece of biography and is fully explained on his very interesting memoirs on his website. Overall a very interesting character and a very sweet album.

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Darryl Holter Crooked Hearts
MUSIC NEWS NASHVILLE Review by Chuck Dauphin June 30, 2012

New Folk Tunes: Darryl Holter: Crooked Hearts
It's been a while since I have heard a great murder song. For the most part, they just don't make songs like that anymore. Moments into, "Mary Brown," the first cut on the album, there's already been one. It definitely qualifies as a song of passion and mystery that will leave an impression on you - along with those Waylon Jennings-ish guitar riffs. The good thing is that there is a lot more where that comes from on this album.

A native of Minnesota, Holter also tips the hat to the sound of the 1960s. The organ work of Matt Rollings is a great way to set the mood on the title cut, and that vibe also works well on the wistful "November Rain." But, there is a lot more to him than that.

He delivers a countrified version of Bob Dylan's "Love Is Just A Four-Letter Word," and even takes an excursion through the mountains on Richard Thompson's "Walking The Long Miles Home." He saves the best for last, with a pair of emotional ballads to close the album in "Mouffetard Noir" and "Midnight In Cologne," where he really gets a chance to show his depth. All in all, a very solid collection from an artist that deserves to be heard!

Darryl Holter, Crooked Hearts

PARCBENCH Review: Darryl Holter Crooked Hearts

Written by Greg Victor in Music on June 30, 2012

*** (out of 4 stars)

Darryl Holter is one of a kind. I'm not going to try to classify, nor compare him to any other artists (who would that be, anyway - some sort of Jacques Brel-meets-Johnny Cash figure?... or Rod McKuen having a really hard life in some parallel universe...?). Instead, I'll just willingly enter the world he creates on his latest album, Crooked Hearts. It is a world we live in, but don't often hear songs of that are this honest. Holter has a voice that is a force to be reckoned with; it is strong, relaxed and makes it clear that he means what he sings.

Most songs have a lyric that pretends to be a poem - a goal rarely achieved in any meaningful way. Darryl Holter chooses to go the more complicated, more rewarding route; he sets prose to music. Sure, it may pass as poetry once in awhile, but what is really happening here is more narrative and more specific. Floating on a heartfelt keyboard passage ("Midnight in Cologne") or speaking truthful cadence to a persistent drumbeat ("Love Is Just a Four Letter Word"), the words that Holter sings are entire screenplays that come to life through song.

Essential Downloads: 'Crooked Hearts,' 'November Rain.'

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Darryl Holter Crooked Hearts Review

Country Music People Magazine

darrylholter June 2012 - By Paul Riley

DARRYL HOLTER: Crooked Hearts | Producer: Ben Wendel | 213 Music

Here is a huge talent. Country/Americana singer-songwriter Darryl Holter currently lives and works in L.A, but is originally from Minneapolis. Apart from music, this is the singer's third release, he also writes books.

The Crooked Hearts disc finds Darryl Holter with a Grammy-nominated producer, Ben Wendel, who completely understands his music. There are eight fantastic original songs, plus five very well-chosen cover versions. The backing band are perfect, with special mention needed for steel guitar player, Greg Leisz and piano/organ player Matt Rollins.

Darryl Holter is also joined on two tracks (3 and 7), by his daughter, singer Julia Shammas Holter, who releases CDs of obsessively beautiful songs.

Crooked Hearts begins with Dave Alvin's 1998 song Mary Brown. The new version of this dark song sounds even darker and more ominous with Darryl Holter's powerful vocal, and the wonderful steel guitar. In the 1960s Bob Dylan wrote a song called, Love Is Just A Four Letter Word. He doesn't seem to have ever recorded it but folkie Joan Baez did, and now Darryl Holter has. Here it becomes a thoughtful country song with a short solo vocal by the singer's daughter. The other stand-out cover version (they are all highly original), is Richard Thompson's Walking The Long Miles Home. My ears rebel when any English folk music is heard and I detest the original version. This however, is a gigantic improvement, the track becomes pure country, with fiddle and steel guitar. Very reluctantly I have to say that Richard Thompson is a fine songwriter, pity he sings! The bell at the start of the track is a neat touch. Other cover versions are a beautiful, haunting version of Benmont Tench's Why Dont You Quit Leaving Me Alone and country ballad I Ain't Blue, which has a sensitive, understated vocal by Holter.

This disc is not only about cover versions, Darryl Holter writes songs as good as the covers. He is a storyteller, title track Crooked Hearts tells of a man and woman off to a robbery. There is a kind of desperation in the characters, which is brought out by the superb vocal. The dark romance of Take Me Away has the lyric, 'delete all the promises'. A street in Paris features in Mouffetard Noir, a track that captures France and the cafe society, with smoky late night jazz clubs. This is songwriting of a very high standard, it feels like Leonard Cohen on peak form.

The final track, Midnight In Cologne combines the melody of an old jazz track from 1974, by Keith Jarrett, with new lyrics. This beautiful piano led ballad provides a perfect end to an astonishing disc, from a singer who deserves to sell millions of discs. This album has everything, fantastic songs, great backing tracks, a producer at the top of his game, and at the centre of all this Darryl Holter, one of the very best singer-songwriters in the world right now. For this disc only eight out of a collection of 40 songs were chosen, hopefully the others, will soon be, 'chosen'. Darryl Holter may be a genius.
- Paul Riley

Darryl Holter Crooked Hearts Review
Exclaim Magazine - Toronto, ON
May 01 2012 - By Kerry Doole

You can't always judge an artist by the quality of the material they cover, but it works in Darryl Holter's case. On his third album, the L.A.-based singer-songwriter (and Woody Guthrie scholar) covers tunes by Richard Thompson, Bob Dylan, Spider John Koerner, Dave Alvin and Benmont Tench, with the latter two also making guest appearances.

Holter's eight originals are equally effective showcases for his authoritative vocals; he has a lived-in, ruggedly honest voice that's, at times, reminiscent of Billy Joe Shaver. A

strong cast of players assembled by Holter and producer Ben Wendel (Kneebody) includes steel ace Greg Leisz, Don Heffington and Matt Rollings, while daughter Julia Holter duets nicely on Dylan's "Love Is Just A Four-Letter Word." Moody, piano-driven closing track "Midnight In Cologne" is based on the melody of a Keith Jarrett composition, confirming that Holter can be adventurous in his songwriting approach. This is a fine work.
(213 Music)

Darryl Holter Crooked Hearts Music Review: From www.blogcritics.org
-Author: David Bowling, Published: May 28, 2012

Darryl Holter's music can be classified as that of a folk singer, an American roots artist, or if you want to stretch a bit, a pop artist. His type of music really does not matter as the focus is always upon his stories. His booming voice has now returned with his third album of tales that will amuse, scare, intrigue, and ultimately entertain.

Crooked Hearts is mostly a dark album that is inhabited by real but extremely flawed people. There are few happy endings in the musical universe of Darryl Holter. There is longing and romance but they are usually countered by betrayal and heartbreak. It is not an album for the light of heart on a sunny day, but rather one that can be appreciated as the shadows fall. It explores the dark places of the human story.

Holter has always been able to write much of his own material. The title track is a first person narrative of two lovers committing a robbery but the real crime is yet to come. "Mouffetard Noir" takes place in picturesque Paris but the story has an unhappy ending and long-term regret. Many times it is fate that brings people together but in his "November Rain" that does not mean they were right for each other. The most creative track finds him using the music of the fourth track of Keith Jarrett's 1974 album Concert At Cologne as a foundation for his lyrics of a bittersweet memory.

Holter also chose his cover material well. Dave Alvin's "Mary Brown" is the album's lead track and sets the tone for what will follow as it combines love, crime, and betrayal into a painful but unforgettable mix. Richard Thompson's "Walking The Long Miles Home" is a tale of loneliness. Bob Dylan's "Love is Just a Four-Letter World," which is often associated with Joan Baez, is given a masculine interpretation.

In many ways Crooked Hearts is a throwback album as it takes old themes and populates them with an assortment of imperfect characters. The result is an album of music that draws the listener in and keeps his or her attention throughout.