

Reviews

by Chris White



Secrets of the Lonely
Chris Koster and the Lonely
Kharma Music
2005

Two years in the making is suggested by Kingston singersongwriter Chris Koster for arranging his first full length album Secrets of the Lonely. It took that long to release so with respect I will take the time too by exploring every song in this review. Secrets of the Lonely is well worth the wait for music fans as this inaugural album is boded with fifteen great tracks for over an hour of listening enjoyment.

Chris Koster and the Lonely is Chris Koster (vocals, keyboards, guitars), Joe Carscadden (guitar, piano, vocals), Cheri Rose (guitar, vocals), Colin Blamire (Drums), and Scot Mulligan (Bass, vocals).

The album opens with my personal favourite "Camouflage" a keyboard/percussion driven up tempo ballad. The song is a bit dark but easily penetrates your senses with passionate vocals and intense lyrics.

"Catastrophizing" is a toe tapping battle cry from Koster who as always is wonderfully supported by his band the Lonely. Time after time they deliver superb guitars, memorable violin, distinguished bass, and prominent drums.

The first single from the album "If U See Me (When I'm Like This)" which was released to selected radio stations months prior to the April 2005 album release. Superb lead vocals and harmonies as I can tell but hearing shades of the late great George Harrison in this song.

"Wartime Romance" lyrics include "...Love's so close u can smell its fur, u better go and pack for a long winter...". The rhythm and pace of this selection is reminiscent of early U2 from their War album to get the ideal of what vibe I'm feeling in this spectacular song.

Without knowing Chris Koster's birthdate I may suggest he's an Aquarian as perfectionism can be found in "The Alchemist (Don't Worry)". Harmonies, strings, and the beat are all together in this tightly produced song.

Chris Koster is more than a songwriter, he's a storyteller proven in "Love In The Western World" which starts with a great golden age of radio sampling line. This song is arranged with a bit of heart and powerful vocals. Lyrics include "... She's quite unassuming, but not for long ..." so you can only imagine the intensity of the song. Koster and Joe Carscadden share writing duties.

"Sufferville" is not only a song but a place where we have all passed through or for some of us a place we stay and never checkout. It's filled with pain and heartache. Koster really goes out on a limb with this impressive song showing what's going on in his head and what he sees, through our eyes.

Outstanding piano playing in "Honestly". It's a beautiful ballad. Close your eyes and enjoy the ride Chris Koster and the Lonely take you on.

Prince's "When U Were Mine" is purely sensational with great backing vocals and harmonies. The lyrics grab your attention as overall this selection is very, very addictive. If you ever written a diary or journal this song is definitely the soundtrack for it.

The title track "Secrets of the Lonely" is another personal favourite of mine that the band often close their live shows with. What a

great song and fitting for the band. Not sure who came first: Chris Koster and the Lonely or the song Secrets of the Lonely. You'll have to ask Koster, after all "...your secrets safe with me ...".

Chris Koster and Joe Cascaletti again share writing duties on "Brothers, Sisters, Enemies". We know who they are but if you're not exactly sure tune into this brilliant song. It's a commanding song of heartache from Chris Koster and the Lonely; I hear so many mixed messages in this song perhaps I need to re-open my eyes and embrace the truth that is around each and every one of us.

Another winner from Chris Koster is "In This Life". I love the backing vocals that occasionally punctuate the lyrics, almost like a musical exclamation point.

With musical depth and haunting lyrics "Sincerity Blues" is a more than a song. "...The talent is getting restless. How do you tell who will follow through? ...". It's dark yet the vocals breathe reassuring life into its message.

The ballad "Mary Ann" is a beautiful piece of work. The lyrics are consuming. It's mysterious and very familiar rolled into one. The mixing and mastering is quite seductive to the ears as Koster uses the full spectrum of the studio's environment.

"I Don't Care (Anymore)" Koster drops his vocals an octave or two sounding a whole lot like legendary Robbie Robinson or early Phil Collins fronting Genesis. We are indulged by stirring images created by striking lyrics and amazing studio mixing. This classic song on Secrets of the Lonely proves Chris Koster is not a one-trick pony; this could even be Chris' signature of what we can expect in next album.

Live notes, lyrics, and outstanding album art are what you can expect and enjoy. Recorded at The Bathhouse, Rumble Cove Studios, Homework Studios, and even Chris Koster's home the dynamic mastering of this album is a treat for all music fans. Highly recommended.

www.chriskoster.ca