

Singer-Songwriter/Blues

CROSSING THAT RIVER Grant Dermody

(self issued) available through CD Baby and at Dusty Strings

The buzz in Seattle the last couple of months has been: check out Grant Dermody's CD. The session ace and perennial mouth harp coach at Blues camps was out with his own sound, backed by top local talent and a couple of out of town ringers. The buzz is right. Crossing That River is like hearing The Band for the first time. This is the grand sweep of American music, perfectly blended and synthesized, not hybridized; this is primal, elemental, the ancient tones, yet played with keenness and fluidity and glee that makes even the darkest inner emotions burst forth with the joy of puppy love. Dermody is primarily a bluesman, but he knows that the American genius includes our way with pop and our vacations to nearby islands: after leading off with the Boz Scaggs-like "Breakthrough" and a clutch of blues standards, he breezes through a melancholy 1950's style pop instrumental, "It's Alright", and a calypso number, "The Leeward Side" that are so good that, rather than stand out as incongruent, one hankers for his next album to be all Caribbean. The good news is that the best material on this CD are the originals: While the covers are outstanding – passionate, reverent, exuberant – Dermody's own songs are masterful, with stirring imagery and startling revelations. If this CD gets around as it should, expect to see Dermody's lyrics in the margins of college kids' notebooks and in Rolling Stone the next time they ask Lyle or Bob or Dave what they've heard lately that they wish they'd written. Crossing That River is produced by Orville Johnson, who bends strings on most tracks and whose mongrel folk sensibilities are perfectly attuned to Dermody's own deep understanding of what moves the hearts and feet of Americans.

(Tom Petersen)