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Scott Kirby, "Sol Searching," Little Flock Music

I've told this story so many times, if you have heard it before feel free to skip forward a few lines. Back about seven or eight years ago, I was listening to Radio Margaritaville when I heard – with a nod to Monty Python – “something completely different.” The lyrics had to do with the beach, but it wasn't done by Jimmy Buffett. The RM website didn't tell me who it was and I listened for the DJ to announce the song but he never did. The same thing happened the next half dozen or so times I heard it – but each time I would stop whatever I was doing and listen, transfixed by the lyrics about living by blue water – something I have had the opportunity to do a couple of times, only to get yanked back to reality way before I felt it was time. I long to do it again someday and I wore the words of the song like a dream coat. Eventually, I found out the song was called “Lucky Enough” by Scott Kirby. I have had the good fortune to see Scott perform several times – interviewed him for my blog, Beaches, Bands & Bars. Not only do I credit him (and Radio Margaritaville) for opening my eyes and ears to the world of Trop Rock, but Scott remains one of my favorite Trop Rock performers – and that song, “Lucky Enough,” still sits on my list of favorite songs of all time... “I'll raise my glass, you can kiss my old ass” indeed.

Fast forward to 2013 and Scott's latest CD, “Sol Searching.” It's his sixth studio outing – seventh overall, counting his live “A Night On The Beach” CD. And, once again, it's full of reflections on the turning of one's calendar pages and the desire to find that place in your life that makes YOU happy, where you're “Lucky Enough.” But, unlike some artists who tend to focus on the partying side of our annual trip around the sun – the “bright and shiny” - Scott's songs tend towards the wistful and introspective. But, not in a negative sense. I made the observation to Scott once that, at first listen his lyrics may sound “glass half empty,” he is really an optimist. He seemed surprised by that but thought some more and finally said, “I guess you're right!” It's the difference between writing about the rainbow and writing about the guy holding the empty pot at the other end, waiting for it to get filled with gold. And, if only a few coins fall in it's ok, as long as you're near someone you love – and blue water. The opening track is a great example, “Turning Of The Tide.” Featuring a melancholy harmonica and gentle piano, it includes lines like “Days go by and how time flies...” and “Baby we were born to be in a shanty down by the sea...cause folks like us were meant to live in small houses.”

But, like many of Scott's songs, it isn't about giving up, it's about acceptance, and finding fulfillment in those things that make you smile. In "Turning," once the singer accepts that "the big new place, you see, it was never meant to be" he lays his head down to get a good night's sleep.

Next up is the title track, with its play on words (Sol being the Spanish word for Sun). Cut from similar cloth, musically, with a saxophone substituting for harmonica, "Sol Searching" immediately makes me want to pack up the car and drive somewhere whenever I hear it - Anywhere there are boats bobbing on the water. "Pick up the pieces, pick up the pace...when all you want to do is feel the sun on your face" and "When you wake stark mad in the middle of the night...southwind whispers, baby, book that flight." If I ever get a boat, I want to name it Sol Searching.

Although Scott spends a lot of time in Key West and the bar in which he's a co-owner, the Smokin' Tuna Saloon, he splits his year between there and his "home port" in New England. Several songs on "Sol Searching" pay homage to those roots, including track three, "Any Old Town In New England." A clap along rocker, the focus is on Beantown but places like Nantucket Sound and Narragansett Bay also get name dropped. "Vineyard" (the only track on the CD not written by Scott) and the closing number, "Old Beach House" also take the listener to the Northeastern US - the latter an especially poignant song about respecting where you come from that could have just as easily been recorded by the late, great John Denver. "Life is not a perfect thing, it's tattered and it's torn, like the curtains in this old beach house the wooden steps so worn. But, when it's all been said and done we do the best we can and pray for one more perfect day..."

I have used words like wistful, melancholy, and poignant to describe Scott Kirby's music but he is no sour puss. As I said earlier, his songs brim with an understated optimism - and more than a little humor. "Guys Like Us," for instance, explores the chemistry between crazy women and the fellas who fall for them and "Whiskey" is a funky, bluesy love letter to that golden spirit.

I can't review a Scott Kirby CD without mentioning the sound. While some Trop Rockers opt for the lo-fi approach, letting electronics substitute for real musicians (generally due to limited budget), Kirby CDs, "Sol Searching" included, are full-on professional productions, with strings, brass and lots of top notch guests. Peter Mayer lends backing vocals and the All-Star rhythm section of Russ Kunkel and Leland Sklar (Bob Dylan, Neil Young, Stevie Nicks, Carole King, Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt) lend a hand on "Guys Like Us."

Another outstanding outing from a true singer/songwriter. Now, excuse me while I pour a glass of rum, settle in to my comfy chair... and do a little "Sol Searching." For more on Scott and his music, visit [www.scottkirby.com](http://www.scottkirby.com).