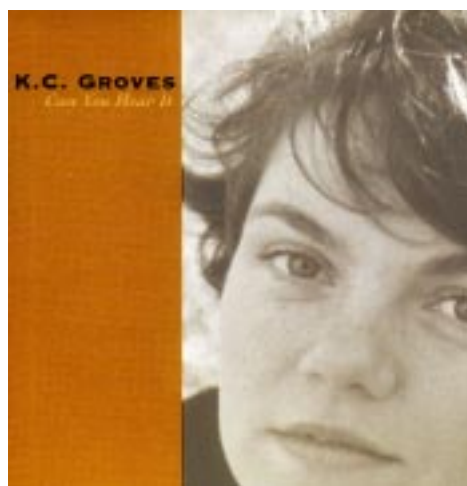


Can You Hear it? The Answer is Yes!



Albums come in all forms and flavors. Some leap right for your throat with bombastic catchiness the moment you first put them on. These tend to be great in the short run, but have little staying power. Others are more perplexing at first and then slowly begin to make sense after repeat listenings. This kind tends to turn into treasured favorites that can still be enjoyed years later. One of the rarest types of album is the one that comes on very catchy and inviting from the get-go, and then still manages to reveal layers of depth and musicality over a length of time.

Local bluegrass singer-songwriter KC Groves' new debut CD *Can You Hear it?* falls into that last camp—it is immediately inviting, and yet rewards committed listeners with some real beauty and grace. Everything about the album just oozes effortlessness. From KC's high, silvery voice, to the expertly played backing tracks of some of bluegrass' most popular practitioners (including Tim O'Brien, Laurie Lewis, Peter Rowan and the late, lamented Charles Sawtelle, who co-produced the album with Groves before he recently passed away) and local greats. The songs themselves are so tuneful and accessible that their true depth and quality just kind of scoot by while you are enjoying the heck out of them. It's practically a collection of standards-in-the-making!

Stand-out tracks include the masterful, banjo-driven ballad "Peach Pie", which manages to tell you the entire story of a relationship through a quiet recollection of buying a piece of pie at a church bake sale. The duet "I'll Take You", which is sung with a plaintive Peter Rowan, was co-written by Groves and local songwriting legend Dick Siegel, and is a gentle love song masterpiece. The more up-tempo, band oriented tracks are just as powerful: "Can You Hear It?" is a toe-tapping ode to old timey music that makes you want to run out to the car and drive right down to a folk festival in Kentucky. "New Mexico" is one of those pro-southern weather songs destined to bum out listeners all over the snowy northlands. Groves displays a sly sense of humor on "Bad Boy Blues", the savvy narrator shocking her grandma with her desire to find a suitably James Deanish beau.

Throughout the album, she manages to write songs that fall squarely in the bluegrass/old-timey genre and which speak of the favorite classic themes: longing for unrequited love, memories of home, loss and bittersweet desire. What sets her apart are the little details in her lyrics, her impossibly clear voice with its liquid phrasing, and her uncanny ability to surround her creations with the perfect blend of acoustic guitars, banjo, mandolin, fiddles, cellos, dobro, upright bass and harmonies. Other professional bluegrass musicians out there should treat this album as a manual of how to make a cohesive album—so many offerings from the genre come across as disjointed and uneven. By comparison, *Can You Hear It?* flows like a quiet river through springtime hills, the sun playing on the surface of the water drawing one's eye from how deep it really is. Very refreshing and very highly recommended.

Miscellaneous Mutterings: In case there are any fellow Dylan-philes out there looking for a suitable way to celebrate the Great One's birth month, I want to take a moment to mention Bobfest 2 at the Gypsy Cafe on Saturday, May 22nd. I am the ersatz host of this second-annual benefit for SAFE House Domestic Violence Project, which features a great line-up of local, Detroit and Lansing area musicians each playing one of their favorite Bob songs. This year's mob includes KC Groves, Dick Siegel, George Bedard, Jo Serrapere, Chris Buhalis, The Original Brothers and Sisters of Love, Jim Roll, Audrey Becker, Dave Boutette, Whitley Setrakian, David Mosher, Adam Druckman and others. Last year's was one of the most enjoyable gigs I've ever attended, and this year's promises to be a continuation. What more could you want? Dylan, awesome musicians, and it benefits a great cause. Show up early if you want a seat. Maybe I'll see you there.

Until next time, take care and be joyful! ☑