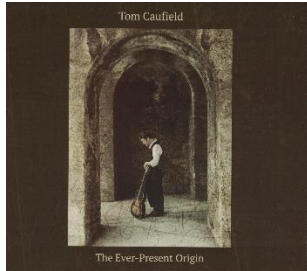Tom Caufield

The Ever-Present Origin

Extraordinary guitarist **Tom Caufield**'s latest introspective journey is called **The Ever-Present Origin**. Caufield is good for throwing out the cryptic album name and having you figure out its significance as you listen to the music. I have been foiled more than once. Although noted for solo guitar, this album features some electronic embellishments, but nothing that gets in the way of the pure, esoteric experience that results from Caufield's careful craftsmanship. His use of technology is in recognition of the inevitable Hobson's choice of intrusion or benefit that the modern world has come to accept as every day. Fortunately, his music explains everything.

Caufield starts out with the title track, **The Ever-Present Origin**, a consequential work which I think is based on Swiss philosopher and poet Jean Gebesn's book of the same name. The idea that the "now" is an ongoing concept that is continuous and repeatedly recreating itself with every passing moment. Every second that passes is an opportunity for recreating the now. Tom's intro sounds like the ticking of a clock and then flowing elements fade in emphasizing the tempo. The sparing use of strings against meticulous fretwork only emphasizes the passing of time. Carpe minutae.

With long, drawn out resonations Caufield has me thinking of an "infinite sustain guitar" on the cover **With or Without You**. His straight-on version is one of the most tender ever extracted from U2's Joshua Tree album. This achingly slow rendition seems to underscore the tremendous amount of hurt that one heart can manage and still go on beating.

The title of the track **Greetings from A Dark Time** seems to be ironic as the gentle music is anything but dark. Perhaps he is talking of the time between dusk and dawn. Tom's melody is sweet, free-flowing, and thoughtful. The polyphonic interlude in the tune was unexpected, but delightful.

One of my favorites on The Ever-Present Origin is a slack key sounding number called **Opus No. 160**. Like some old world clockwork made of brass gears and tightly wound springs, this music has a lot of movement and meshing to bring about the desired result. Shimmering elements hide in the background, cello doubles as the bass, and piano oils the mechanism into perfect running order. Overall a fun tune.

Let's face it. **Skin to Skin** is sinfully sumptuous. It is a combination of sustained and sensual notes and a timeless melody. The drifting, yet fluid innuendos of Tom's guitar seems to cover the scene with a smoky shroud of sensuousness. One cannot help but feel the heat and height of anticipation.

Leonard Cohen's **Hallelujah** has become a popular cover, but not like this. From the first strum to the last, Caufield takes the tune and wrenches out every bit of pathos to be had. Under his tender hand, the sorrow of every sin is revealed and remunerated. Outstanding track.

Celestial Navigation is Tom in his element. His echoing solo guitar has a universally singular voice that sings about the stars. Laying back on the grass on a summer's night and watching the sparkling heavenly jewels and just hoping for that chance to make a wish is all anyone could ask for. One gets so immersed in the stargazing experience that time means very little.

For the Hurting is the last tune on the album. It has an early 60's feel to it, like an old Every Brothers song. The crystal clear notes just seem to echo away the pain as they wash over you. There is a time for everything, and now is the time to weep. Tomorrow, perhaps not.

Tom Caufield's new album is a thought provoking anachronism. I like that the CD version of this recording is offered like a vinyl record with an imagined Side-One and Side-Two. Although he has a little help from technology, the overall work shows no major dependence and every tune could be performed sans electrical energy. Six steel strings and an echo chamber seems to more than compensate for any device that needs batteries or a plug. Excellent.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews