

Hi-Res was conceived as the soundtrack to a movie-length video that never got made - and without the visuals it doesn't really hold together as a concept album. There may have been a chance that Ely would be received as the new Daryl Hall & John Oates, but it didn't happen and Ely's association with MCA came to an end.

Ely would get to his best work on 90s album *Letter To Laredo*. But, if you like a bit of rock'n'roll, these releases are worth hearing for the *Musta Notta Gotta Lotta* and *Live Shots* tracks.

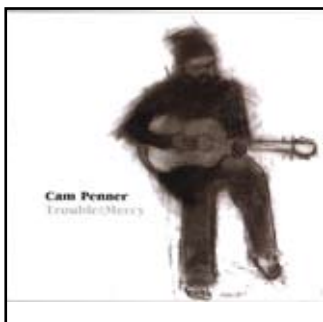
Douglas McPherson

CAM PENNER Trouble & Mercy ★

All Of Yesterday / Thirteen / She's In My Head / Trouble & Mercy / Too Tired To Pray / Roam / Once A Soldier / Tired Of This Town / If You Love Somebody / Peace Of Mind / You Are Gold

Producers: Jon Wood / Cam Penner

Prairie Boy Records: no number
46:30



In this world of MP3 downloads, CD packaging has to be as good as possible to make the purchaser want to own the CD. The packaging for *Trouble & Mercy* is so unimaginative that you wonder why they've bothered. Ironically, the artist's name and the title of the album aren't even on the spine. Surely the performer has more confidence in his abilities - he is after all touring the UK in May and June - but all we're given is a dull silhouette.

Trouble & Mercy is the third album from this Canadian singer/songwriter. He has worked with the homeless for many years

and in recent times he has been opening for John Prine, Chip Taylor and Richard Thompson.

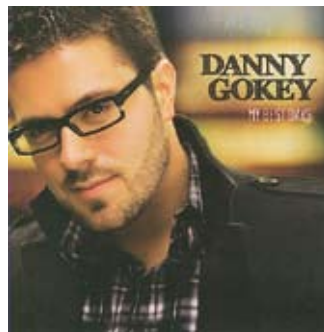
Okay, judging by the press release, Cam has had a hard life but why does he have to inflict it on us in the name of entertainment? These are truly terrible, unmemorable songs and they sound like Steve Earle's early demos on a very bad day. There are no melodies to speak of and the songs dovetail into each other. At least, there's *If You Love Somebody*, which rips off Sting, and *You Are Gold*, which does the same to John Prine.

These are dull songs with no focus and bad rhymes and Cam can't even decide who he's singing to. In one song, he's talking to us and then addresses his father. When he tells us that *Thirteen* is his lucky number, one reason is because he has 13 letters in his name. Yeah? Well, he has to explain that is when he takes his full first name and adds the middle initial. Oh, shut up.

As you might expect, there is minimal accompaniment. The argument for this low-key release may be that less is more but, don't believe them: in this case, less is less.

Spencer Leigh

DANNY GOKEY My Best Days ★★★



My Best Days Are Ahead Of Me / Like That's A Bad Thing / I Still Believe / Tiny Life / Get Away / It's Only / Life On Ya / Crazy Not To / Be Somebody / I Will Not Say Goodbye

Producer: Mark Bright
RCA Nashville 760554
36:74

Fans of the musical juggernaut American Idol may be surprised to hear that the

soulful Danny Gokey, (who during his tenure on the hit US show expressed a fond desire to perform R&B tinged ballads) has decided to make his musical debut with a country album. However, Gokey fans and indeed fans of country music needn't fear for *My Best Days* is a stellar debut and a great introduction to one of Country's newest rising stars.

Gokey bursts onto the country scene with the rocking mid-tempo anthem *My Best Days Are Ahead Of Me*, the song is a great way to start Danny Gokey's country career. It's a radio friendly, feel good track that embraces the idea that in spite of what has gone before the best moments in life are still to come. This track works well as an introduction to Gokey's music because it fits with the singers' buoyant personality and showcases the powerful voice that millions fell in love with during his Idol days. The positive message and powerful vocals displayed on the opening track is the perfect way to open the album and lays down the expectations for the rest of *My Best Days*.

Fortunately, Gokey doesn't stray too far from the formula of providing upbeat, positive tracks that are both fun and have the potential to showcase his vocal talents with tracks like *Get Away*, *Like That's A Bad Thing* and *Life On Ya*. With a slight rocky tinged edge to them, Gokey is able to perform these tracks with a gritty, rough tone that works well and won't disappoint even the most sceptical of country fans.

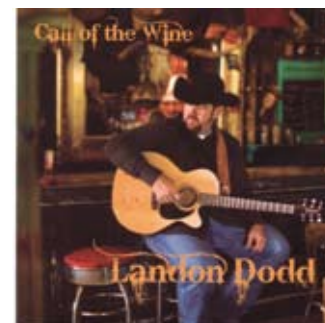
However, the album does have a number of low points whereby the quality of songs drop and Gokey seems to lose his connection with both the material and the country genre as a whole. *Be Somebody* lacks the country sound of the rest of the album, making the use of the steel guitar and banjo in the background feel pointless and out of place as it adds nothing to the track. It would seem that Gokey tries too hard to embrace the soul sound of his vocal on this track making it sound more soul than country.

In parts it feels that *My Best Days* has been watered down for wider appeal in order for Gokey

to attract the fans that voted for him on Idol. Despite a number of less memorable and effective songs, Gokey does manage to bounce back for the closing track, *I Will Not Say Goodbye*. This is a powerful and emotional number about moving on from losing a loved one and Gokey sings it with such heart wrenching honesty and authority that you can't help but be moved by the words in the song. "*I'm supposed to be strong. I'm supposed to find a way to carry on. But I don't want to feel better; I don't want to not remember.*" Gokey is able to sing these words with such emotion that it truly shows the singer at his best, singing a meaningful song that he has the ability to connect with and really move and touch the audience. This is a rare talent to hold and proves that with the right material and focus, Danny Gokey has the potential to be a great country singer.

Stephen O'Hanlon

LANDON DODD Call Of The Wine ★★★★



Call Of The Wine / I Bought The Shoes (That Just Walked Out On Me) / Good Year For The Roses / Perfect Stranger / New Lips / We're Off And Loving Again / Face The Music / I Want To Hear It From You / Mr. Right And Mrs. Wrong / I Went To Bed Loving You / What A Liar I Am / There's Something About A Lady

Producer: Jim Loessberg
Heart Of Texas Records HOTR 4148
33: 55

It seems like there's no stopping those folks at Heart Of Texas Records. Now they've come up with another new name big-voiced singer who has made a terrific little album. Landon Dodd is vocally somewhere between