

Dean Owens *Southern Wind* Reviews & Press Cuttings



**AT THE HELM
RECORDS**

16 Feb 2018

★★★★★ *Hits a sweet spot... delivers straight and true...* MOJO Magazine

★★★★★ *...borders on genius... A-List...* Country Music People

★★★★★ *...a rousing vulnerability that at times recalls Richard Ashcroft...*
Country Music Magazine

So good "Whispering" Bob Harris (BBC Radio 2)

Superb... Ralph McLean (BBC Radio Ulster)

his songwriting talent can stand shoulder to shoulder with the best around... there are songs on this album that others would die for... a landmark album... FATEA
<http://www.fatea-records.co.uk/magazine/reviews/DeanOwens/>

★★★★★ *soulful blend of Scottish folk influences and Americana stylings ...a happy facility to come up with songs that sound impressive, then grow in stature...* R2 Magazine

★★★★★ *a fine piece of work from one of Scotland's finest songwriters...* Music Riot
<http://musicriot.co.uk/album/southern-wind-dean-owens/>

A beauty of an album... fabulous music... songs that just distil all the Scottish, Americana into a unique blend... <http://nodepression.com/album-review/knockout-blow> No Depression (Featured Album)

an album that fully deserves to take Owens' career to a higher level... Folk Radio UK
<http://www.folkradio.co.uk/2018/02/dean-owens-southern-wind/>

rowdy, rough hewn, heartland music infused with both attitude and aptitude... a skilled Scottish songwriter who emotes from his soul... an absolute sense of authenticity...
<http://www.goldminemag.com/blogs/indie-showcase/indie-spotlight-rants-raves> Goldmine Magazine (Indie Spotlight)

Americana meets the Big Country sound of Nova Scotia... game-changing release...
<https://rockingmagpie.wordpress.com/2018/02/08/dean-owens-southern-wind/> Rocking Magpie

Music that is impossible not to believe in... Three Chords & The Truth
<http://www.threechordsandthetruthuk.co.uk/2018/02/album-review-dean-owens-southern-wind.html>

A pearl of a record... Roots Time (Belgium)

a constant on the UK and beyond music scene for a number of years... Owens sounds as sharp as he ever has... <http://flyinshoes.ning.com/profiles/blogs/2554640:BlogPost:90255> Flying Shoes Review

peppered with strong songs... worthy addition to his cannon of catchy personal tales that reach out and people will connect with... <http://folkandtumble.com/dean-owens-southern-wind/> Folk and Tumble

The latest instalment in Dean Owens' steady rise towards the top echelons of Scots musicians... <https://paulkerr.wordpress.com/2018/03/02/dean-owens-southern-wind-at-the-helm-records/> Blabber 'n' Smoke

★★★★★ *a highly polished production and package from a highly polished singer/songwriter...* <http://www.southsideadvertiser.biz/Dean-Owens-Southern-Wind-CD-Album-Review.htm> Southside Advertiser

★★★★★ *...a voice like Roddy Frame inhabited by the soul of Ryan Adams or the laid back Ronnie Lane...* Daily Express

a unique talent who should be heard by all... American Roots UK

one of the standout Americana artists dwelling this side of the pond... Lonesome Highway

#36 Official UK Americana Charts

#3 Euro Americana Chart (March)

Album of the Week Celtic Music Radio
<http://www.celticmusicradio.net/26975-2/>

Featured Album No Depression

Editor's Choice / Video Premiere (*Southern Wind*) Folk Radio UK
<http://www.folkradio.co.uk/2018/02/video-premiere-dean-owens-southern-wind/>

Video Premiere (*The Last Song*) Americana UK
<http://americana-uk.com/video-dean-owens-the-last-song>

Hottest Record of the Week AAA Edinburgh
<http://www.aaedinburgh.co.uk/aaas-hottest-record-week-dean-owens-southern-wind/>

Featured Artist Laurel Canyon Music
<https://www.laurelcanyonuk.com/lcm-sotd-2018-blog/2018/2/9/southern-wind-dean-owens>

Must Watch Video (*Southern Wind*)

Real Roots Café (Netherlands)

www.deanowens.com

Dean Owens



Southern Wind

AT THE HELM. CD/DL

He's a little bit country, and a little bit rock and soul.



Never one to sit still for long – whether musically or as a constantly touring

troubadour – Dean Owens is a true questing soul. Over six previous albums, the Leith native has explored acoustic folk and country, digging deep into personal sorrows and frustrations. For *Southern Wind* he's spread his wings as wide as possible, picked up a crack

MOJO

backing band in Nashville and headed for the country. From the barrelling openers *The Last Song* and *Southern Wind*, Owens hits a sweet spot somewhere between the Little Feat-esque groove of *No Way Around It* and twangsome rockabilly *Elvis Was My Brother*. There are glimpses of his old bread-and-butter singer-songwriter self, particularly in late-night lament *Louisville Lip* (a broken tribute to Muhammad Ali), but throughout Owens delivers straight and true on his self-proclaimed 'Celtic spirit, country soul'.

Andy Fyfe

★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ DISAPPOINTING ★ BEST AVOIDED ★ DEPLORABLE

DEAN OWENS



Southern Wind

(AT THE HELM) www.atthehelmrecords.com



Dean Owens's last release *Into The Sea* made waves. His soulful blend of Scottish folk influences and Americana stylings

are allied to a happy facility to come up with songs that start off sounding impressive and grow in stature with repeated listening. A happy consequence is that he's now signed to influential Brighton roots label, At The Helm.

Sticking to a winning formula, he's recorded again with Neilson Hubbard in Nashville, retaining multi-instrumentalist Will Kimbrough as part of The Southern Swamp Orchestra. A stunning ensemble, augmented by harmonies from Audrey Spillman and The Worry Dolls, frame Owens's often-haunting vocals.

The first song, 'The Last Song', on one level a celebration of pubs and pub rock, skips along with quite a Faces vibe and shout-outs for Lane and McLagan, except, for all the *joie de vivre*, that prominent 'last' gives pause for thought. The tone changes for title track 'Southern Wind', progressing from austerity to a mighty band sound, speaking of restlessness and search.

The search carries us with it through vulnerability in 'When The Whisky's Not Enough', Southern soul in 'Mother', all the way to 'Love Prevails', a simple and heartfelt summation inspired by Rodney Crowell's childhood memories.

Nick West



March 2018

f r u k

the very best in folk, acoustic & americana

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ALBUM REVIEWS • EDITOR'S PICKS

DEAN OWENS: SOUTHERN WIND

REVIEWS



Dean Owens: Southern Wind

by Mike Davies

For the follow-up to 2015's *Into The Sea* and his debut for At The Helm, Dean Owens took himself off to Nashville to enlist the services of go-to producer Nielson Hubbard. *Southern Wind* is an album that fully deserves to take Dean Owens' career to a higher level.



DEAN OWENS Southern Wind



The Last Song / Southern Wind / Elvis Was My Brother / When The Whisky's Not Enough / Bad News / No Way Around It / Louisville Lip / Anything Helps / Mother / Famous Last Words / Madeira Street / Love Prevails
Producer: Neilson Hubbard
At The Helm Records
50:49

"Southern Wind has gone straight onto my A list and is likely to stay there for a considerable time."


Dean Owens' talent borders on genius and as often happens with genius sometimes it takes a little getting used to. His 2012 album *Cash Back – Songs I Learned From Johnny* took a while to grow on me but is now a firm favourite. I wasn't quite so struck with *Into The Sea* in 2015 although there were a few absolutely brilliant tracks on it, and I am afraid my copy of his 2001 debut *The Drama Tapes* is in a box in the attic for a reason. *Southern Wind* has gone straight onto my A list and is likely to stay there for a considerable time.

Don't expect this album to fit neatly into any particular sub genre: I have several times on these pages been critical of new releases which claim to be country or Americana or alt-country or roots in little more than a desperate attempt to impose themselves upon an audience, any audience. The difference is the quality and diversity of Owens' writing will have all of those sub genres fighting to claim him as their own.

Perhaps the most commercial track is the first one which trucks along nicely around a very infectious hook written, apparently, with former Faces bass man Ronnie Lane in mind although I suspect some of the more discerning radio presenters, certainly on this side of the Atlantic, may well pick up on *Elvis Was My Brother*. Neither should you be surprised at all if your favourite deejay gives *Mother* a spin on March 11th. Speaking personally I am very much a fan of the beautiful simplicity of *Louisville Lip*; great lyrics with a sweet muted trumpet solo adding a touch of magic.

With a run time of fifty minutes this is a generous package, it is also the first Dean Owens album to make me determined to go and see him perform live. But, given my comments in the opening paragraph, what excites me most about *Southern Wind* as a Dean Owens album is that you just know sooner or later the man is going to deliver one that is even better.

Chris Smith



Official Charts





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MONTHLY CHART

MARCH 2018

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| 2 |  | Ed Romanoff <i>The Orphan King</i> | Flamrock Records | 89 | pts. | 16, 27, 39, 40, 41, 42 |
| 3 |  | Dean Owens <i>Southern Wind</i> | At The Helm | 43 | pts. | 32 |
| 4 |  | Marlon Williams <i>Make Way for Love</i> | Dead Oceans | 41 | pts. | 17, 28, 30 |
| 5 | | Rod Picott | Madonnation | 39 | pts. | |

March

DEAN OWENS: Southern Wind ★★★★★ (At The Helm)

Leith lad Owens' latest album, recorded in Nashville under the guiding hand of top producer Neilson Hubbard and with a serious band of top sessioneers, is a supremely confident collection of roots rock. It's also a very personal album, from finally writing a song for his mum (Mother), remembering his sister's brave fight with cancer (Madeira Street) to lamenting the loss of his boxing hero Muhammad Ali (the superb Louisville Lip). His Caledonian Americana is delivered in a voice like Roddy Frame inhabited by the soul of Ryan Adams or the laid-back Ronnie Lane, especially on opener The Last Song and Anything Helps.

Daily Express

Friday March 23 2018

Released on the distinguished UK Americana label, At The Helm Records, Southern Wind by Dean Owens is a solid straight ahead example of rowdy, rough hewn heartland music infused with both attitude and aptitude. Owens is a skilled Scottish songwriter who emotes from his soul, and in so doing, purveys an absolute sense of authenticity. It helps that he's also enlisted some stellar support in producer Neilson Hubbard and guitarist Will Kimbrough, the latter of whom describes Owens's sound as "The lure of home. The lure of the muse. Both romantic and hard to reach". Kimbrough's eloquence is hard to deny and indeed, what he says sums up the album's obvious appeal. A veteran artist of considerable merit back home, Owens himself says he possesses "country spirit/Celtic soul", and indeed that's an ideal way to characterise this moving manifesto.

GOLDMINE The Music Collector's Magazine

DEAN OWENS *Southern Wind*

(16 Feb 2018, At The Helm Records)

Reviews & Press Cuttings

DEAN OWENS
SOUTHERN WIND AT THE HELM

4 ★★★★★

Country Music Magazine

Ashcroft, the brilliance of Owens' craft is that it's hard to decide if his songs are happy or sad. *The Last Song* is impossibly wistful, but gains momentum as the bandleader's strum is joined by raucous piano.

Elvis Was My Brother moves lightly between major and minor – Owens finding a kinship in the King – while the reflective *No Way Around* is always warmed by an ember of hope. *Louisville Lip* is a closely observed slice-of-life, with acoustic guitar and military-funeral horns decorating the tale of Owens and his late father watching a Muhammed Ali fight, while *Madeira Street* is so heavy with nostalgia that it takes the breezy optimism of *Mother* just to stop your lip trembling.

Southern Wind should blow this journeyman along just fine. **HY**

★ **STANDOUT TRACKS** *The Last Song*, *Madeira Street*, *Louisville Lip*

There are worse soundbites to deploy in your press-pack than Irvine Welsh ("Scotland's most haunting singer-songwriter") and Bob Harris ("One of Scotland's best troubadours"). They're right, but you don't have to be tartan-clad to appreciate Dean Owens: a man whose songs swirl the hollow-eyed romance of the American plains with the hardcase grit of his native Leith. Sung with a rousing vulnerability that at times recalls Richard

STORIES COLUMNS REVIEWS RELEASES

ALBUM REVIEW

DEAN OWENS
SOUTHERN WIND

A Knockout Blow

Dean Owens - Southern Wind

BY LYNDON BOLTON

LIVE REVIEW

More reviews »

Now Hear This

A look at notable new releases, hand-picked by an ND editor

STACY CHANDLER

FEBRUARY 22, 2018

New Directions

One of the great things about roots music is its tendency to branch into new directions, and we've got plenty of that going on from artists with new releases this week. Caroline Rose cranks up the fun meter on her latest release, a bold step beyond her earlier, more folksy fare. And Janiva Magness puts an Americana spin on her soulful sound. Caleb Caudle, meanwhile, takes a more reflective tone. Check in on these artists and many more in reviews of this week's new releases!

REVIEWS

< 5 of 12 >

A Knockout Blow

Dean Owens - *Southern Wind*

BY LYNDON BOLTON

Scottish singer-songwriter Dean Owens has made a deserved name for himself on either side of the Atlantic. Over here he is highly rated by Irvine Welsh (*Trainspotting*) and broadcaster Bob Harris. Over there the company he keeps says enough: Will Kimbrough and Neilson Hubbard. Owens plies his trade under the banner "Celtic Spirit, Country Soul." This blend has been evident in all his work, but *Southern Wind*, his seventh album, brings out this unique flavor. This is his best yet; it's a beauty of an album.

Full Review »

The Journal of Roots Music
NO DEPRESSION

DEAN OWENS *Southern Wind* (16 Feb 2018, At The Helm Records) Reviews & Press Cuttings



BROWSE > HOME / ALBUM, FEATURED / "SOUTHERN WIND" – DEAN OWENS

"Southern Wind" – Dean Owens



It's about time we had a new album from Dean Owens, isn't it? It's been two and a half years since "Into the Sea", not that he's been resting on his considerable laurels, that's not his style. He's been involved in production, collaboration and loads of touring and somehow managed to fit the "Southern Wind" sessions in to the mix. Although the album's released under Dean's name, it's fair to say that it's more of a collaboration with his guitar-slinger of choice (and mine), Will Kimbrough. The musicians and production team are Dean's regular Nashville crew and they all do the usual superb job, but the creative thread running through the centre is

"Southern Wind" is the Owens/Kimbrough partnership.

They bonded over, among other things, a mutual love of Ronnie Lane and that's the starting point for the album. "Last Song", the album's opener, wouldn't feel out of place on any of the Faces albums with its loose rock feel and characteristic melodic basslines. It's an homage and a tribute and it's loads of fun; proof that Dean and Will can write an upbeat song (and it's not the only one on the album).

Although the title track and "No Way Around It" have a slightly menacing Delta feel, "Southern Wind" still has very strong sense of time and place in twenty-first century Scotland and the stories of its inhabitants in difficult social and personal circumstances. "Elvis Was My Brother", "When the Whisky's not Enough" and "Bad News" all fit into this category, while "Famous Last Words" is a typical Dean Owens slant on the longest day of the year; that things can only get worse from here on in. Nights are fair drawin' in, eh? "Anything Helps", another Will Kimbrough co-write, fits neatly in to this little group with its Ronnie Lane solo era stylings and one of the album's greatest lines 'Took a swing at life and missed'.

There's a place here for the intensely personal as well; the gorgeous "Madeira Street" looks back to more innocent times through a prism of grief and celebration, while "Louisville Lip" celebrates the life of Dean's hero Muhammad Ali. "Mother" is a light-hearted sixties pastiche (just imagine it on the soundtrack to "Inspector George Gently" or "Call the Midwife") with clipped guitar and a hint of Phil and Don, while "Love Prevails", closing the album, channels The Chordettes' "Born to be With You", particularly in Will Kimbrough's laid-back solo.

Dean Owens has that rare poetic ability to fashion perfect songs from life's everyday stories and the ability to deliver powerful, plaintive performances of those songs. On this album, the partnership with Will Kimbrough and producer Neilson Hubbard has created perfect settings for both the melancholy and the upbeat songs. "Southern Wind" is a fine piece of work from one of Scotland's finest songwriters.

"Southern Wind" is released on Friday February 16 on At the Helm Records.



Consistently hailed as one of Scotland's finest troubadours, Dean Owens was formerly lead singer of much-loved Americana outfit The Felsons before going on to forge a successful solo career. The Leith singer, who counts Irvine Welsh and Russell Brand among his fans, is about to release his latest album (his seventh) on Brighton's At The Helm Records.

Southern Wind is the title track – and it's our **Hottest Record of the Week**. Co-written with Dean's long term musical collaborator, Will Kimbrough, it's the song that got the whole ball rolling.

To mark it, he has released a new video – dark, moody and powerfully evocative, with echoes of Trainspotting, Peaky Blinders and The The's The Infected. It was filmed – by Portobello-based Waltzer Films – in and around Leith, where Dean grew up, including at Scotland's oldest boxing club, Leith Victoria AAC Boxing Club.

It features a cameo from actor (and fellow Leither) Jamie Sives (Jory Cassel from Game of Thrones, Doctor Who, Clash of the Titans and the upcoming Outlaw King (William Wallace)) as The Boxer.



Bob Harris @WhisperingBob

OBE 4 x CMA Broadcaster of the Year. Americana Trailblazer. Also check @WhisperingBobTV @OGWT40 @BHarrisCountry @UTATRootsFest

Oxfordshire UK
bobharris.org
Joined November 2009
Born on April 11

Tweets 48.7K Following 2,494 Followers 66.3K Likes 6,625

Tweets Tweets & replies Media

Bob Harris @WhisperingBob · 27m Really good...

Dean Owens @deanowens1 new single - Southern Wind on @UTATRootsFest with @WillKimbrough & @BrigitteDeMeyer. Will and I wrote this one together. Taken from new album - Southern Wind Thanks to @MilesMH92 and @WhisperingBob for looking after us on the day. It was a blast. [youtube.com/watch?v=4Kmqq3...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Kmqq3...)

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Gets my vote too...

Richard Leader Music @leader_music Seldom have I heard someone who seems so at home in their songs and songwriting as the new album Southern Wind from @deanowens1. It just seems as natural as something from JJ Cale.

2:12 PM · 13 Jan 2018

3 Retweets 8 Likes

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Dean Owens Retweeted

Bob Harris @WhisperingBob · 1h So good...

Dean Owens @deanowens1 @WhisperingBob new single #SouthernWind out on @AtTheHelmRecord on Friday. Taken from new album - Southern Wind. Co-written with @WillKimbrough and produced by @NeilsonHubbard



FATEA

Another under the radar artist that continues to release quality music, Edinburgh singer songwriter Dean Owens is typically a 'musicians / musician', highly regarded by his peers for both his creative writing ability and versatility. *Southern Wind*, his first release on At The Helm Records, is his seventh studio recording and was recorded in Nashville under the watchful eye of in demand producer Neilson Hubbard who also worked with Owens on his 2015 release *Into The Sea*. Much of the writing was in collaboration with his close friend Will Kimbrough, a superb musician in his own right and an artist very much on the same page as Owens. Their combined lyrics capture the moments beautifully across the thirteen songs on the fifty-six minutes that make up the album.

The rocking opener *The Last Song*, complete with yelps and whoops, is followed by the storming title track *Southern Wind*, currently on release as a single. The album especially excels where Owens recalls and reminisces on youthful and more innocent times. *Elvis Was My Brother* evokes memories of a childhood friend whose fascination with Elvis compensated for his absent father. *Louisville Lip* pays homage to his own childhood hero Muhammad Ali and *Madeira Street*, where Owens grew up, recalls his childhood, influenced no doubt by the untimely passing of his sister a few years ago. The plight of the homeless is considered on *Anything Helps* and the bittersweet *Famous Last Words* brings to mind mid-career Elvis Costello at his most sentimental. However, the real highlight of the album is the stunner *Bad News*, it's not the first time its theme -the lover to be avoided-has been visited and Owens' interpretation is as good as any of its predecessors.

All in all, a cracking album that I'll be often revisiting in the coming months by one of the standout Americana artists dwelling this side of the pond.

Declan Culliton

f r u k
the very best in folk, acoustic & americana

For the follow-up to 2015's *Into The Sea* and his debut for At The Helm, Dean Owens took himself off to Nashville to enlist the services of go-to producer Nielson Hubbard. Hubbard also contributes piano, bass, drums and assorted bits and bobs alongside seasoned Nashville musicians such as Dean Marold, Evan Hutchings and Will Kimbrough. Indeed, Kimbrough not only plays on the album, he's also co-writer on five tracks, the first up being album opener *The Last Song*. *The Last Song* was, in fact, the first they wrote together, a bouncy end of the night countrified pub rock number drawing on a mutual love of Ronnie Lane and The Waterboys. The title track follows it (the video for which premiered on FRUK); another co-write and the impetus for the overall album, a slow march, blues and gospel-informed number about the call of home featuring meaty Kimbrough guitar, swirling organ from Dean Mitchell, the Worry Dolls on harmonies and the big voice backing vocals of Kira Small.

It's back to train-rolling uptempo rhythm for *Elvis Was My Brother*, a song inspired by a letter from a friend who, raised by his mother, frequently uprooted and with little contact with his father, found a friend and brother listening to Elvis on his mother's cassettes. Marrying his Scottish roots and the Americana influences of Townes Van Zandt, featuring aching resonator guitar *When the Whisky's Not Enough* is a slowly gathering sad, broken relationship number steeped in a feeling of hopelessness. Owens and Kimbrough switch acoustic and electric guitar roles for *Bad News*, another moody, bluesy song which, underpinned by soulful organ, is, apparently inspired by a movie rather than anything biographical, a song for a woman trapped in an abusive marriage. Small makes a return, gospel wailing through the defiant in the face of the odds lyrics of *No Way Around It*, opening on slide guitar before picking up a swampy tribal thump rhythm with Kimbrough laying down both the banjo riff and snarling guitar licks.

Written back in June 2016 on the night Muhammad Ali died, *Louisville Lip* is a simple acoustic ode to his childhood hero and his inspiration to become join the Leith Victoria AAC Boxing Club when he was a kid. It's one of three very personal numbers. *Mother*, co-written with Kimbrough and with input from Danny Wilson, is, obviously, a love letter and thank you note to his mum, an almost reggae lope rhythm with trumpet and a percolating organ, the line "you can't break a cracked cup" apparently one of her saying. The other, *Madeira Street*, is a heart-aching companion piece to *Evergreen* off the last album, a song written in response to his older sister Julie's battle with cancer. She sadly lost the fight before that album came out and the new song, an acoustic strum sway featuring the Worry Dolls on harmonies, is titled for the street where they grew up and his memories of their shared childhood.

Of the other numbers, set to an acoustic strum and piano, and with again perhaps a touch of Ronnie Lane, the look on the bright side lyrics of *Anything Helps* was inspired by a sign he saw a homeless man holding near a Tennessee freeway. *Famous Last Words* is a waltzing, trumpet-coloured musing on vows that, while meant at the time, never seem to last. Meanwhile, written mainly by Kimbrough and based on a true story, featuring mandolin solo by Joshua Britt, *Love Prevails* is an inspirational country slow waltz about a family devastated by violence and trapped in poverty, but ultimately surviving the wreckage through the love they shared.

Southern Wind is an album that fully deserves to take Owens' career to a higher level.

The long-awaited follow-up to 2015's *"Into The Sea"* finally muscles its strident way into the collective conscience of the record-buying public, and there's no doubting on this evidence that Dean Owens *"Southern Wind"* has firmly catapulted him into the big league, where his song-writing craft can stand proudly shoulder to shoulder with the best around. Owens has always been a mercurial teller of stories, an advocate of stirring the wanderlust within and an acute observer (and often analyst) of the truth, and *"Southern Wind"* coalesces all of those inherent traits into a beautiful whole which ebbs and flows with a languid and often startling fluidity.

There are songs on this album that others would die for, whether it's the dobro-infused country heartache of *"When The Whiskey's Not Enough"* or the snarling soul blues of *"No Way Around It"*, Owens' evocative vocal style envelopes all with an understated command that comes from experience, roads well travelled, and an innate song writing skill that allows gravity but also a wry sense of self-deprecating humour.

"The Last Song", which contrarily opens the album, seems destined to become Owens' live show closer for the (un)foreseeable future. A mix of sadness and joy, a buoyant and bright country rhythm that uplifts the heart, killer lead guitar licks, and a chorus ready to evoke a hundred voices in unison. Title track *"Southern Winds"* explores the themes of change further. A southern-blues-based swamp stomper, replete with dirty guitar, swirling keys, and full on choral attack. A song that reaches out from the speakers, cuffs you several times around the head, and demands that you listen. Such latent energy. Songs such as *"Elvis Was My Brother"* and *"Louisville Lip"* show that Owens isn't afraid of a little introspection either. In fact, it is by laying bare his soul, and thereby elements of himself, that allows Owens to draw the listener in to his world. A great record is one that allows total immersion, one that can make you forget your troubles for a while, and one that concedes a connection with the artist, and on that count this album, and these songs collectively, make one such record.

There are some stellar US players right here, including award winning guitarist Will Kimbrough, but ultimately it is Owens and his songs that take centre stage. *"Southern Wind"*, on the evidence that these songs forcefully substantiate, is a landmark album in all areas. Every song has been wrought from the heart, every lyric torn from the spirit of the poet within. Albums like this don't come around too often in an artists career, so for now let's wallow in the glow of a songwriter at the top of his game.
Ken Brown

The Journal of Roots Music

NO DEPRESSION

A Knockout Blow

Scottish singer-songwriter, Dean Owens, has made a deserved name for himself on either side of the Atlantic. Over here he is highly rated by Irvine Welsh (Trainspotting) and broadcaster Bob Harris. Over there the company he keeps says enough; Will Kimbrough and Neilson Hubbard. Owens plies his trade under the banner, "Celtic Spirit, Country Soul". This blend has been evident in all his work but Southern Wind, his 7th album due for release on February 16, brings out this unique flavour. **This is his best yet, it's a beauty of an album.**

The album is a collaboration with Will Kimbrough, with whom Owens wrote most of the songs. Together with the musicians of The Southern Swamp Orchestra they created some **fabulous music**. Neilson Hubbard produced, recorded and mixed the rich sound that swirls throughout the record.

Southern Wind is a **high quality collection but where it adds an extra dimension is the way the Celtic and the Country weave a unique colour**, rather like tartan perhaps? The title track lies behind the whole project. Owens is from the north and Kimbrough from the south. Nashville, the capital of country is somewhere in the middle, not just physically but metaphorically. It is there that big skies and vistas of the southwest meet the gritty landscape of Leith, the part of Edinburgh that is home to Owens. The blend comes out throughout the record. 'Elvis Was My Brother' tells of a childhood friend of Owens growing up in Scotland whose dad wasn't around much, he had no brothers, his big sister had left home and his mum worked hard to hold things together. Left to his own devices, 'Elvis was my brother/he was my friend/Elvis was the one who taught me everything'. The song reveals Elvis as almost a surrogate father. That the next generation would fill this gap came as a comforting end. This was set in Scotland but wouldn't have happened without America.

The young Dean Owens was a boxer, 'Louisville Lip' is about how his older self felt on hearing of Ali's death. Owens was in Amarillo, Texas and the sad news brought back memories of him and his dad watching the 'greatest' in some of his most famous fights. This evocative soliloquy has Owens once again shrinking that distance between Scotland and the US. Staying with boxing take a look at the video below for the title track, 'Southern Wind'. Set in and around the Leith Victoria Boxing Club where the young Owens would spar, its imagery deals a blow as strong as those he suffers. "Leaving home, southern bound" makes clear his destination. His anguish of leaving is palpable but so his determination to seek the better life that lies ahead, and further south. (Can you identify his adversary?)

There are songs that are pure home. 'Madeira Street' is where Owens grew up. He lost his sister three years ago and the song is a painfully sad look back to happier times together. "Look at your picture/hangs on the wall/ smile at the camera/so beautiful". The chorus that Owens builds up towards the end only adds to the poignancy of his words. In 'Mother' with its gentle beat, Owens offers his mum a song about her, something she thought had been missing from her son's repertoire.

Then there are songs that just distil all the **Scottish, Americana into a unique blend**. 'Bad News' was inspired by some characters in an old movie. Owens and Kimbrough swap acoustic and electric guitars to great effect. 'Anything Helps' is about a homeless man by the side of the freeway but he could be anywhere. The sentiments transcend borders.

The album rocks too. Owens describes, 'The Last Song' as a pub rock song reflecting a further bond with Kimbrough, this time their mutual love of Ronnie Lane and The Waterboys. If you walked into a boozer down Leith Walk or a bar in Nashville to a band playing this you'd equip yourself with a large one and stay to the very end. 'No Way Around It' has more than a hint of defiance, Owens lets rip vocally and musically. Kimbrough's banjo adds to the armoury.

'Love Prevails' brings the album to a close. Based loosely on stories Rodney Crowell told Owens while touring, the title says it all.

In many ways roots music is defined by collaboration. In Southern Wind Dean Owens, Will Kimbrough, Neilson Hubbard and their wonderful Southern Swamp Orchestra are testament to that. **It most certainly lives up to "Celtic Spirit, Country Soul".**

LYNDON BOLTON



Americana Meets The Big Country Sound of Nova Scotia On Game-Changing Release

Like many reviewers I've been sitting on this disc since before Christmas; giving it occasional outings in the car and on the RMHQ office stereo; getting my head around the nuances of the new songs and to some extent the 'big production' which isn't what I expected at all. With a box full of other CD's to review I'd always planned to write my prose in the week before release; only to find the world and it's dog have been uploading and it has to be said; national magazines have even been printing glowing reviews. So; does the world need my thoughts? Probably not; but as a long term fan and supporter of young Mr Owens I may as well chuck in my twopenn'orth before he disappears off into the Ed Sheeran stratosphere.

Let's start with album cover.....YOWZA.....how cool is that artwork? If you were in a record shop and saw that in a rack you would just have to pick it up, wouldn't you? The correct answer is YES. Then when turning it over the song titles all look 'interesting' and in keeping with that iconic imagery on the other side. So; does the music live up to the packaging?

It's a personal quirk but I love songs that start with 1...2...3.4!; and Last Song which is actually the first song starts in such a manner; and it's a big ole passionate Alt. Country Rocker with a Celtic heartbeat. Even the first time I played this CD I thought that Dean has finally 'grown into his voice' and I still feel that way about this particular song; he sounds like he trusts himself to 'let go' and that's just what he does; and there's some mighty fine guitar and piano too btw. With a powerful song like that as an opener there's always the danger that the artist has peaked too soon.

Oh no.....oh no, no, no. The title track Southern Wind follows and **can only be described as EPIC.....**as it slowly builds from humble beginnings through an atmospheric chorus through to the thunderous ending; **conjuring up memories of Bob Seger and even the Allman Brothers;** but hey Dean Owen sounds like neither.....**this is very much HIS SONG** and one that is surely destined for legendary status on some soundtrack or other; or at the very least Top Gear's next Father's Day CD! Even if Dean Owens only ever recorded those two songs he could die a proud man; but there's even better to come.....trust me.....there is.

The Scotsman's Folk roots show through the Country facade on When The Whisky's Not Enough; and on No Way Around It he gives us a crashing Swamp Rocker Deluxe with added Gospel singers in the background, plus there's even a jaunty calypso nod with the bittersweet Mother and immediately afterwards Dean manages to make the delightful ballad Famous Last Words take a swerve down a Jazzy street, but it fits in perfectly well as it prepares us for the maudlin and very Scottish Madeira Street with its dark edges and rainswept imagery.

Many times over the last few years I've said in public that much of the best Americana Music I hear comes from way outside the USA and I believe this album is just such a case; as my two favourite songs here are love songs to and about two of America's finest sons; but written and sung with a passion that only thousands of miles can bring; as both characters are probably taken for granted in their homeland. Whereas in Europe the memory of both Elvis and Muhammad Ali are still revered to this day. Over a virtual Twangfest on Elvis Was My Brother Dean sings about a friend that "had no Father from the age of 10" so he used The King as a surrogate "brother" listening to and learning every single word on Forty Greatest Hits and using the songs as a template for life itself. **A very clever song indeed.**

Most reviewers will go for SOUTHERN WIND as the 'best song' on this album; but listen deeply to Owen's words on Elvis Was My Brother and then follow it with the heart-shredding Louisville Lip, featuring some truly mournful trumpet (cornet?) in the background and you will hear a **songwriter on the verge of greatness.**

Dean Owens has been around the scene for a very long time; and with the Whisky Hearts trooped backwards and forwards the UK and Europe plying their trade to anyone that would listen; but that hard apprenticeship is about to finally pay off as **SOUTHERN WIND has all the hallmarks of being a Game-changer for this proud son of Leith; and it's fair to say he deserves every bit of success coming his way.**

This is Scottish singer songwriter Dean Owens seventh album in a recording career that commenced with 'The Droma Tapes' way back in 2001. The recordings of Deans that I've heard over the years have always been more than worthy of the time spent repeatedly listening to the discs, something that is necessary to pick up all of the little nuances in his songs. 'Nuance' is often overlooked in music but in actual fact is something that sets apart the top writer/performers from the rest; the better the writer the greater the amount of nuance in their songs, something that holds the listener and helps create depth and atmosphere.

Dean is able to jump from one style to another without breaking step something that enables a music fan to listen to his recordings over and over without becoming tired of the sameiness that many suffer from, ultimately giving him utter believability irrespective of a songs subject matter. Irvine Welsh, a man who knows a thing or two about quality writing described Leith native Dean as, Scotland's most engaging and haunting singer-songwriter, a description no one who has heard his songs or studied his lyrics will dispute.

This album was **beautifully produced** by another hugely talented singer songwriter Neilson Hubbard, a man who has been heavily involved as a musician and producer in the two incredible recordings from the Orphan Brigade. All twelve songs were written by Dean Owens, although on tracks 1, 2, 8 and 12 he worked with Will Kimbrough and track 9 with Kimbrough and Danny 'Champ' Wilson. Dean handled all lead vocals, acoustic and occasional electric guitars and was backed by the 'Southern Swamp Orchestra' a studio 'pickup' band consisting of Will Kimbrough on guitars, banjo, mandolin, backing vocals, bass and piano, Dean Marold, bass, Evan Hutchings on main drums and percussion with Neilson Hubbard playing second drum kit, bass and piano, as well as 'various bits and pieces.'

Dean's vocals are always emotion charged whilst at the same time displaying a warmth and depth that makes whatever he sings entirely **believable**, unfairly giving him a huge advantage over most other singer songwriters! Add the fact that he is a **thoughtful, high quality songwriter and it's difficult to imagine any music fan not falling for this tremendous recording**. Even his live performances are full of rich depth and integrity, often having an almost mesmerizing effect on the audience, certainly the ones that I've been in. His 'generic' style is often quite ambiguous, usually containing varying degrees of a 'country' offshoot but not exclusively so, allowing him to follow his muse wherever it takes him, knowing he is a servant to his songs rather than trying to make 'country' records or 'folk' if it comes to that.

The album gets off to a tuneful start on The last song with metronomic bass and percussion and the melodic electric guitar creating an Eagles like warmth on the intro then in comes Dean with an excellent vocal on a song written with Will Kimbrough and name checking a few of their musical heroes, giving the album a nice punchy start. The title track, Southern wind, is an intensely dramatic song that has an arid, wide open spacey atmosphere with the harmonies creating an otherworldly atmosphere and the keyboards and excellent lead guitar enhancing the already mighty sense of drama. It is a song that is a fine example of musicianship and arrangement skills whilst also emphasizing the quality of Dean's vocals as well as the haunting, almost gospel quality of the harmonies.

When the Whiskey's Not Enough starts with a gentle piano and acoustic guitar whilst Dean's clear precise vocals are further enhanced by dobro, bass and percussion with just a hint of twanginess on an excellent slow moody ballad that gradually builds in intensity and passion as the sense of hopelessness grows exponentially. Banjo, percussion and guitars get No way around it, an excellent mix of country, gospel, blues off to an evocative start on a powerful tale that has a deep rural atmosphere on a song that again benefits from the beautiful arrangement. The harmonies increase the power and sense of drama on a song that builds to an increased spirituality on another Will Kimbrough co-write. Final mention is of the slow moody tribute to the late great Mohamed Ali on The Louisville lip, with just vocal and guitar eventually being joined by restrained brass adding to the poignancy of an excellent, heartfelt song, written by Dean when he heard of Ali's death.

Usually when writing about a 'singer songwriter' it is enough to say they are talented in both aspects but in Dean Owens case it needs some qualification simply because his talents are so exceptional. His vocals are warm and expressive and able to evoke any situation he is confronted by in his songs, some of which over shadow even his vocals. In his writing he seems to have the ability to get to the heart of any subject matter making it believable whilst also coming up with high quality melodies. The man really is a unique talent who should be heard by all and I'm sure if he was, the fame and fortune his talents so richly deserve would be well within his reach. This is a tremendous album by a man who started his career well and continues to improve on his excellence.



"Southern Wind" the new album from Dean Owens, and his first for his newly signed to UK label "At The Helm Records" was released on 16th February 2018 and for Dean Owens fans old and new, there are some musical gems here.

Dean Owens has built himself a solid reputation over the years as one of the best singer/songwriters to come out of Scotland in many years, and his musical travels via Leith to Nashville and back again may have at times taken him the long way round to where he wanted to go, but this album simply proves that the long road there and back has been worth it in the end.

"Southern Wind" was recorded in Nashville, Tennessee, with the same team that were responsible for Dean's "Into the Sea" album – producer Neilson Hubbard, award winning guitarist (and long time musical collaborator) Will Kimbrough plus some other great musicians.

This album will on some tracks sound immediately different from some previous works, but this is simply Dean Owens pushing the musical envelope of sounds and music a little further than he has up until now explored in some areas, and a clear indication that as a musician and songwriter Dean Owens is growing in stature in both areas. Dean could so easily sit back on his musical back catalogue as there are already many classics in it, but instead there is that inquisitive need to explore the new that all good musicians and songwriters have. In my own opinion, an artist must always be given room to step outside of what people expect of them at times as otherwise they run the very real risk of becoming stale and a musical parody of their earlier achievements. For fans of that classic Dean Owens sound though, there are still more than enough songs that are easily identifiable as Dean's.

One of the first things (apart from the music) that anyone will notice about this album is its high production values. All too often these days, too little time is spent on production and getting that sound just right as artists concentrate more on digital download sales. This is an old fashioned album designed to be heard on a good audio system in the comfort of your home, or maybe just driving down some dusty road to Nashville (well at least in your mind's eye).

The title track from this album "Southern Wind" is available now as a single, but there are so many other tracks that could easily have been singles too. As usual, Dean Owens has not refrained from writing about his own personal life and some painful experiences in that life, and "Madeira Street" is a classic example of Dean's rare ability to expose his inner feelings to the public with such honesty.

Another favourite track of mine on this album is "Louisville Lip". Dean has an obvious love for boxing and this from the heart tribute to the "still greatest of them all" Muhammad Ali is a classic Dean Owens gem. On this song, Dean Owens obviously shares a sporting hero with me – a man whose influence extended far beyond any of his legendary achievements in the boxing ring.

Southern Wind is a highly polished production and package from a highly polished singer/songwriter who is proving beyond any doubt that you can come from Leith and still write songs as well as any of the country greats; it is the feeling inside you that matters and how you express it, not where you come from.



Fine latest album recorded in Nashville from Scottish singer-songwriter Dean Owens, who takes his influences from American roots music

Scottish singer-songwriter Dean Owens is obsessed with American roots music. At first, this might appear to be the obverse of the robust subculture of Americans fascinated by their Celtic ancestry (however tenuous or downright fictitious it is). On closer examination, Owens' folksy tunes are less homage and more reclaiming of something rightfully his. After all, country music - the music of white Southerners - sprang from that immigrant group's deep Scotch-Irish roots.

Owens' new album, 'Southern Wind', was recorded in Nashville, and would comfortably rub shoulders with any native output. It opens with backroom bar toe-tapper 'The Last Song', a swingy, guitar-forward number that goes down as easy as a bottle of cold Bud Light. 'No Way Around' is another catchy slice of countrified pop that chugs along with defiant optimism, lifted by a soaring falsetto backing vocal.

His voice is an instrument in itself, the highlight of downtempo tracks like 'Madeira Street' and 'When the Whisky's Not Enough'. It is smooth, rich and expressive, with nary a rough edge. If anything, it comes across as slick on some of the slow cuts. It, however, shines when he tells stories.

'Elvis Was My Brother' is about a lonely kid growing up with the radio. "I never really had a father in my life/Or older brother to offer me advice..." Owens sings. "Elvis was my brother/Elvis was my friend... He introduced me to the blues/Gospel, country, blue suede shoes." The words ring true with anyone who ever sought solace in pop and his voice weaves like silver thread through the jaunty beat and articulate lyrics.

The other stand-out track is 'Anything Helps', a sweet-sad ditty of a down-and-outer who describes "standing in line at the mission" and notes, "It ain't always been like this/ You can swing in life and miss/So if you're feeling kind/Anything helps". Owens harks, here, to the fine country tradition of empathy for the beleaguered, bereft or plain unlucky.

'Southern Wind' shows how rewarding cultural exchange can be, in the right hands.

Cila Warncke

Penny Black Music

Three Chords and the Truth UK

A Personal Vanity Project Championing Preferred Country, Folk, Americana and Contemporary Roots Music.

If 2017 was the year of countless excellent Nielson Hubbard produced releases, then do not count on them ceasing anytime soon. Scottish singer-songwriter Dean Owens is the latest artist to have paid a visit to this productive Nashville studio and come away with an album strong in pursuing the ideals of the originator. **SOUTHERN WIND succeeds in blending the sensibilities of two nations. Distinctive song writing, often homely and personal, generally reflects the everyday surroundings of Dean, while securely placing his trust in an established posse of Nashville-based musicians is inevitably going to factor in an Americana feel. The conduit for this is the esteemed all-round performing musician Will Kimbrough, who also joins in the song-writing fray to bolster up that component.**

Whichever facet you wish to explore, agreement is a certainty. There is **a depth and maturity to the song writing** that can only really be surmountable through a degree of experience. Songs like 'Louisville Lip', 'Madeira Street' and 'Elvis Was My Brother' are laced with nostalgia, **deeply personal in the first two and acutely observational in the third one.** The implicit nature of the lyrical content helps sow the ideas conveyed. Perhaps being on the same wavelength as the writer assists greatly, but this does not diminish the ability to pierce the outer layers of your mind, body and soul resistance.

The duality of this album leaps out from the first two tracks. A good ole pub rocker kicks things off in 'Last Song'; a track that Dean has tested in the pre-album release shows as one to harness the audience into some remnants of interaction. Title track 'Southern Wind' immediately follows and firmly ferments in your mind where this album is being recorded and the undoubted influence the surroundings are making. Think a little gothic atmospheric and the horizon will come into view.

A slightly roughened vocal presence adds weight to the sentiment of 'When the Whisky's Not Enough'. What more appropriate way to link Caledonia with the home of country music, Apologies for this stereotypical observation. Less re-enforced song writing exists in 'Anything Helps' (inspired by homelessness) and 'Mother', which apparently took an eternity to complete, but further cements the personal nature that forms the Dean Owens lyrical appeal.

The fact that Danny Wilson (of Champs fame) got a credit on the last song suggests the degree that Dean seems to be integrating into the wider UK contemporary roots scene recently. This may be a personal perception, but performances down south with Danny and Robert Vincent; festival appearances and a tie up with At The Helm Records all point to a greater profile than in the last couple of years at least. Obviously, for those in the know, he has been making records for many years with a strong presence in his native Scotland. Undoubtedly, this vast experience has served him well in shoring up the quality that permeates through **SOUTHERN WIND making it a valuable release for fans of serious conjecture song writing.**

Whether sinking into heartfelt ballads such as 'Love Prevails' and 'No Way Around It' or rocking out to higher tempo numbers like the opening segment, this album prospers immensely. A moderate temperate style tends to overall reflect the album, thus allowing the keys, strings and occasional horns to make their presence felt without dominating the literate messages, which ultimately make it a **memorable listening experience.**

Dean Owens makes music that is impossible not to believe in. When the dust settles **SOUTHERN WIND** will find its own niche in the micro world of the artist's catalogue and the macro world of a listener succumbing to **great song writing.** The birth of an album may not be the right time to suggest an epitaph but 'got the message over through the esteemed medium of song' could quite conceivably seal this record.