

Jorma Kaukonen – River Of Time (2009)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Been So Long* 3:56 2 *There's a Bright Side Somewhere* 2:59 3 *Cracks in the Finish* 3:29
4 *Another Man Done a Full Go Round* 3:37 5 *Trouble in Mind* 3:24 [play](#) 6 *Izze's Lullaby*
3:32 7 *More Than My Old Guitar* 3:43 8 *Nashville Blues* 3:22

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9 *A Walk with Friends* 4:32 10 *Operator* 3:47 11 *Preachin' on the Old Campground* 3:47 12
River of Time 2:56 13 *Simpler Than I Thought* 6:09

Larry Campbell - Dobro, Fiddle, Guitar, Mandolin, Percussion, Pedal Steel, Producer, Cittern
Justin Guip - Drums Levon Helm - Drums Jorma Kaukonen - Guitar, Vocals Barry Mitterhoff
- Banjo, Mandolin, Guitar (Tenor) Lincoln Schleifer - Bass Teresa Williams - Vocals

Whether he's singing an original song or covering a gem like the Rev. Gary Davis' "There's A Bright Side Somewhere," Kaukonen's bright acoustic guitar picking and warm vocals breathe life and vitality into the material. On *River of Time*, Kaukonen performs the timeless and the timely, an invigorating mix of inspired originality and traditional songs.

There's a lot to like on *River of Time*. Kaukonen's reading of Roy Book Binder's "Another Man Done A Full Go Around," which adds Larry Campbell on guitar to flesh out the arrangement, lends an irreverent atmosphere to the song's Southern-fried vibe. Mississippi John Hurt's "Preachin' On The Old Camp Ground," with Teresa Williams' gorgeous backing vocals, is a faithful recreation of the song's old-timey, country-gospel roots. With Kaukonen's subtle, filigree fretwork accompanied by shards of banjo and mandolin, the song takes on a positively spiritual air.

Kaukonen's originals are just as smart and heartfelt as his choice of covers. The title track is a relatively upbeat number with reminiscent lyrics, a throwback sound, and the singer's lofty vocals. With a barebones arrangement and scraps of mournful fiddle, the song is a welcome

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recreation of Delta-styled folk-blues. "Cracks In The Finish" is a menacing swamp-blues slider with a roots-rock undercurrent, not dissimilar to some of Sonny Landreth's best work. --- Reverend Keith A. Gordon, blues.about.com

Jorma Kaukonen's revival of his partnership with Jack Casady of Hot Tuna over the last decade has also inspired him as a solo musician. The guitarist/vocalist/composer has produced the Grammy-nominated Blue Country Heart (Columbia, 2002) as well as the splendid Stars in my Crown (Red House, 2007). River of Time is an even more heartfelt and sympathetic collaboration.

The melancholy melody and heartrending lyrics of Hot Tuna's vintage "Been So Long" sets the tone for the CD in its crystal-clear acoustics. Kaukonen and producer/accompanist Larry Campbell expand upon that sound immediately with "There's A Bright Side Somewhere," a resolute statement of optimism couched in bright mandolin and simple drum work.

The blues has always been at the heart of Kaukonen's best music, even when he performed as lead guitarist for Jefferson Airplane, and its tart texture, as well as the storytelling element of the genre, surfaces in the worldly-wise "Cracks in the Finish." Campbell graces that cut with fiddle, while "Another Man Done a Full Go-Round" is an acoustic guitar duet, the jaunty gait of which reaches full flow when Kaukonen and Campbell interact.

The pace of the album becomes a full swagger on "Trouble in Mind," when the two combine with mandolinist Barry Mitterhof, a regular partner of Kaukonen's in recent years, as well as that of former The Band drummer, Levon Helm. Traditional tunes have their own intrinsic warmth, but the cozy confines of Helm's Woodstock barn studio, this recording's site of operations, solidify a truly fraternal feel to the ensemble's work.

Add "Izze's Lullaby" to the list of notable instrumentals in the Kaukonen canon, along with "Embryonic Journey" and "Water Song." A tribute to the artist's young daughter, the gentle dance of the melody and its intertwining rhythm meshes with extra strings to emphasis its tenderness. "A Walk with Friends" radiates a similar tranquility to which the title song and "Simpler Than I Thought" also allude, particularly when reinforced by Campbell's warm steel

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guitar.

A witty take on "More Than My Old Guitar" features Teresa Williams' sweet-toned voice, appearing even more prominently in harmony with Kaukonen on "Nashville Blues." The simplicity of such arrangements on River of Time belies their intricate musicality because the musicianship is inspired and unaffected by any grandstanding. ---Doug Collette, allaboutjazz.com

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