

New David Bromberg Album

David Bromberg: still a demon in disguise Sing Out! The Folk Song Magazine, Spring, 2007 by Roger Deitz

David Bromberg is hardly a real demon--he just plays one on stage. The disguise is that of a musical magician his craft in plain sight: now you hear it, now you don't. Bromberg is an intense, savvy, seemingly enigmatic artist. The guitar wizard labored long and hard to assimilate and explore the music he performs at a level that dazzles the ear. For the nearly forty years I have known David, I pondered what makes for such enthusiastic sorcery. I am still mesmerized by his wryly humorous, technically accomplished presentation. And his eclectic taste. At concerts or in front of the stereo, I lean forward to warm myself by the fire that must burn within a musician who processes what he has heard, lived and loved into such powerful and satisfying self-expression. I find it amusing and ironic that listeners caught up in a frenzy of notes often project super human attributes onto the serious artist that in the final analysis is more restrained than one can imagine. The real disguise? David is a skillful professional going about his business, the business of making music. The demon is in the ear of the beholder.

Recently after a seventeen-year hiatus from recording, David reentered a studio to set down an "intimate" program of folk music. I was curious as to what prompted the effort at this point in his career. David Bromberg doesn't have anything to prove. He may be a virtuoso, but he is one who will debunk misconceptions about his style or technique as easily as share trade secrets just for the asking. There is no self-puffery. "I am not and I've never been a perfect player," he confesses in the liner notes to his new album, *Try Me One More Time* (Appleseed Recordings, APR CD 1099), offering additional insight; "My approach to music has been like folk music in general. When you hear field recordings, they're edited by the guy who's recording them, but the musician most likely knows scores of other material from lots of other genres. Doc Watson, for instance, knows rock & roll, and other music. Robert Johnson was said to be as likely to play Bing Crosby songs as he was to play the blues. I've always recorded and performed tunes from a variety of sources and genres." The album affirms that David Bromberg respects the basics ... good songs, good lyrics and soulful communication. "Seventeen years since you recorded an album?" is the terse question I put to Bromberg.

"Making an album is very intense business. I've produced almost all my albums myself, and I didn't want to spend that much time in a windowless room again. I didn't think I'd ever go back in the studio, but I've worked with my wife, Nancy Josephson, and we recorded at Target Studios, then, just over the border into Elkton, Maryland. The guy whose studio it was was just very impressive. I thought he was a big town talent in a little town, he's really good, his name is Marc Moss. [note. Not the editor of this magazine.] He actually moved his studio up to across the street from me in Wilmington. So without really intending to do an album I would just go in for an hour or two and play some tunes. Just myself and the guitar. Pretty soon, it was an album.

"Nancy produced it. Basically I went in and did whatever tunes came to mind. Part of the original idea came as I was doing a gig down in Texas with Herb Pedersen and Chris Hillman. We were sitting around the dressing room talking about who we learned from, you know who our influences were, and I told them that I used to lead Reverend Gary Davis. They were very surprised at that and I played them some of the stuff and they said you ought to do some. I actually hadn't done the Reverend's things on the stage in quite a long time. So the first thing I did when I did the album were a couple of Reverend things. And then from there I just did some things that had been kicking around. You know, it's a folk music record, and it actually sounds a little bit like a field recording, except the quality of the recording is so high."

The album is dedicated to the memory of long time friend and associate, guitarist Dick Fegy. David thanks Herb Pedersen, Chris Hillman, Steve Bailey and Nancy Josephson for "urging me to do this record." David Bromberg notes the recording was "made entirely using the Martin M-42 David Bromberg Signature Edition Guitar and Elixer [R] Acoustic Guitar Strings. (For more information about this guitar, Matt Umanoff and the 0000 sized, narrow body Martin M-38 model Bromberg played for many years, go to <www.martinguitar.com>).

"What I have been saying about it is that it's the first album I've done where I wasn't trying to impress anybody at any point." David continued. "What one of my friends said to me was that this is not an album that could have been made by a twenty-five year old guy. I suppose it's a more 'mature' recording than I've done before in some ways. I always had control. Nobody ever made me do anything on a record. I just always did what I wanted to. Basically all those records were the way I wanted to do things. They were usually some kind of interpretation of what I was doing with my band live. For this one, I mined a lot of memories, stuff that I had rarely done in public. There's even one tune on there I've never performed for anybody ever." David has always been successful programming his shows and albums with an eclectic mix of diverse songs, juxtaposed on the set list. Yet, every lineup works and flows seamlessly. Was this because he was thinking about the audience? "No," Bromberg responds, "I've never planned a set and I've never done requests. I've always done what the hell I wanted to do.