Bromberg—a demon

by Wanda Adams

Demon in Disguise — David Bromberg
(Columbia)

Don’t let the glasses fool you. This young-looking David Bromberg is in his own right. David’s guitar magic, aided by his passable vocals and a little help from his friends, brings the demon out from his disguise. The result is something very much like having David Bromberg and his magic fingers right in your speakers.

The majority of the songs on this album were recorded live. Two of the cuts, in fact, were done at Pastevin’s coffeehouse in Cambridge. “Hard Working John” features Bromberg on lead guitar and vocals, Ken Kooke on fiddle, Andy Statman on mandolin and Tom Shehan on bass. “Hard Working John” is a nifty little piece because the woods lead directly into the instrumental breaks. Bromberg, Kooke and Statman trade off instrumental work in a sometimes whimsical, sometimes serious manner with a very pleasing overall effect.

Bromberg displays his guitar wizardry most effectively during the instrumental pieces on Demon in Disguise. “Medley of Irish Folk Tunes: Rodney’s Glory, The Rights of Man, The First of May” and “Sugar in the Gourd” are both medleys, also recorded at Pastein’s, is solo Bromberg at his best — just David, his guitar and his voice. “Sugar in the Gourd” is a little flashier, with David and friends Kooke on fiddle; Statman on mandolin; Shehan and Burgh on bass, playing a country-style, rollicky instrumental.

Generally speaking, though, Demon in Disguise is a fine, sometimes acoustic album complemented by excellent musical arrangements and signatures to support the guitarist’s singing. If you go (or if you wanna sing the blues”). “Oh, Mary! You treat your daddy so disdained mean — when I ask you for water, you bring me ginoline . . . The song itself is just fair, and even Bromberg’s warm acoustic fingers don’t transform it into a good piece.

The other whimsical electric-sounding number is “Bojangles” with some nice lead guitar work. “Tennessee Waltz” is a fun cut, half sung, half spoken, half in jest making it smartly, with some nice fiddle work.

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