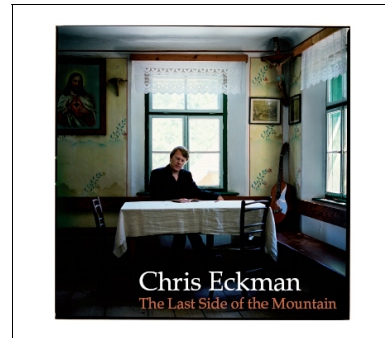


# CHRIS ECKMAN – The Last Side Of The Mountain

Glitterhouse Records GRCD 688 EAN 4030433768822  
premiery: 14.11.2008



Jeszcze niedawno możnaby było napisać po prostu: Lider Walkabouts ze swoim trzecim solowym albumem. Ponieważ jednak Eckman w ostatnich latach więcej był zajęty duetem Chris & Carla (z Carłą Torgerson, także z Walkabouts), swoimi solowymi płytami, zespołem Dirtmusic (z Hugo Race'em i Chrisem Brokawem), nie trzeba podierać się już nazwą tego legendarnego zespołu z Seattle.

Po prostu: Chris Eckman nagrał nowy solowy album. Chris wziął na warsztat wiersze jednego z najważniejszych i najbardziej tragicznych poetów i pisarzy słoweńskich XX wieku: Dane Zajca. Sam Eckman tak to wyjaśnia: "Nigdy dotąd żaden artysta nie miał na mnie tak wielkiego wpływu jak Dane Zajc, może z wyjątkiem Townesa Van Zandta".

Chris nie tylko skomponował, nagrał i zaśpiewał te piosenki z tekstami Zajca, ale sam je także przełożył na angielski (Eckman mieszka od wielu lat w Ljubljanie). Przy nagraniu gościnnie pojawili się min. jego żona Anda Eckman, Steve Wynn, Apollon Chamber Orchestra oraz ... Anita Lipnicka, której wspólne płyty z Johnem Porterem produkował właśnie sam Chris Eckman.

Znany z dbałości o szczegóły Eckman wyprodukował album z brzmieniem zapierającym dech w piersiach. Album "Last Side Of The Mountain" to mikstura amerykanów, folku, alternative-country, bluesa i klasycznego songwritingu na najwyższym światowym poziomie. Apollon Chamber Orchestra dodaje tym utworom orkiestrowej powagi i doniosłości. Po prostu: piękna, subtelna, pełna uczuć płyta...

<http://www.myspace.com/chriseckmanmusic>

## Tracklista:

1. Bells Of A New Day
2. Down, Down
3. Eyes
4. Ransom
5. Who Will Light Your Path (with Anita Lipnicka)
6. Stranger
7. Scorpions
8. Hourse
9. The Same
10. With What Mouth
11. The Last Side Of The Mountain
12. Fragment

Co mówi sam Eckman o idei powstania albumu i o Dane Zajcu:

## The Songs of Dane Zajc

*Then you make a new language of the earth.  
A tongue that speaks words of soil.  
---Dane Zajc "Lump of Ashes"*

*A few years ago I was having coffee in the center of Ljubljana with my friend Tomo Brejc. While we were waiting to order, he pulled a book from his bag and handed it to me as a gift. The book was "Barren Harvest" an English language poetry collection by the Slovenian writer Dane Zajc. Tomo is a photographer of great re-known, and had been asked to photograph Zajc for the cover of the book. He had been given a few copies and thought that Zajc's verse would be something that I might identify with. How right he was.*

*I took "Barren Harvest" home that afternoon and read through it in one sitting. The next day I did the same, and the day after that, the same thing again. Rarely had I been so struck by a book of poems or a work of art in general. After several more readings Zajc's poems had joined company with Townes Van Zandt's "Our Mother The Mountain," Terrance Mallick's "Days of Heaven" and Richard Ford's "Rock Springs" in my own personal Pantheon of artistic inspirations.*

*The poems are stark and direct. They are pointed but never hysterical. They read gracefully, but they are not digested quickly. They are poems aware of the vagaries of solitude and personal struggle but they ruthlessly avoid vanity and voyeurism. They are never reductive, never simply sad, or simply optimistic. They are poems about the joy and failure of language itself. They are often written as impassioned, open-ended dialogues: the poet in dialogue with his fears; with the absent creator; with his lovers, with the reader and even with those who have passed beyond. The poems are rarely pleasant, but they are consistently generous and honest. They always manage to strike a nerve. They always elicit contemplation and complexity of feeling.*

*I have grown to deeply identify with Zajc's sharply chosen words and resonant images. The rich, imposing landscapes (mountains, deserts, forests), the animals of prey with their unrepentant truths (wolves, scorpions, snakes), and the vivid reports from wanderings into lost, hallowed places. Throughout his work, Zajc stoically searches, as the poem says, for "a new language of the earth." A language fashioned from cosmic skepticism and from hands turned dirty from the hard work of living. A language turned up from the mother soil itself, where landscapes actual and metaphorical collide and enchant.*

*This may seem sacrilegious to those in Slovenia who hold him as a national icon, but when I read these poems I am always transported to the great wide-open of my ancestral home in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. Poems like "Stranger" or "Scorpions" or "Eyes" are dramas that could easily unfold in the sublime, and even harsh environments found in the glacial mountains and high deserts outside of Seattle. And while I would never dare to say that there is not something specifically Slovenian about Zajc's world view, I will say that his work speaks very directly to my own experiences and journeys. I believe him to be quite portable, quite universal.*

*Very early in my encounter with his poems I began to dream about turning them into songs. It had been done before. The Slovenian insurgent cabaret act Čompe had fashioned art songs out of several of his poems and Zajc himself performed frequently with Čompe's accordionist Janez Škof, in a musical duo, where Zajc half-intoned, half-sang his creations. But the idea that started to appear to me involved doing things a bit differently. Generally, there is a strong strain of lyricism in Slovenian poetry, and it is probably not a linguistic accident that in the Slovenian language, the word for song ("pesem") is the same as the word for poem. Following this tradition, many of Zajc's poems are profoundly lyrical, at times even suggesting the traditional folk song structure of verses and refrains. This was more the direction I wanted to explore. I wanted to see if I could move the powerful voice of these poems into the realm of traditional song without doing unnecessary violence to either their cadence or their meaning.*

*Of course, when one is working in translation, the question of "meaning" is a thorny issue. There are inevitably many things obscured, many things misplaced. It is an imperfect pursuit. I took this element of the project very seriously and combed all the existent English translations of Zajc's work, and had new translators also take a turn at the poems. On several occasions, I had to slightly deviate from the chosen translations to accommodate the melody or rhythm of the songs I was writing. I also created refrains by repeating certain stanzas from the poems. These things aside, I tried to keep my textual artistic license to a minimum. In the end though, as with any act of adaptation and translation, these songs are at best versions of his words, cut from the original cloth but stitched together by an immigrant tailor, using a borrowed needle, and a different colored thread.*

*Dane Zajc sadly died in October of 2005. I never had a chance to meet him, or to play him the songs that I wrote, but we did have singular, memorable phone call. The poet Aleš Debeljak and his wife Erica Johnson Debeljak (the translator of the above mentioned book "Barren Harvest") had told Zajc of my plan to make English-language songs out of his poems. Apparently Zajc said he was interested in discussing the project, and I was invited to give him a call. I was extremely nervous and kept delaying making contact, because frankly I was star struck. I admired the poems so much that I was afraid that I would not be able to talk clearly to the man who had written them. This actually turned out to be the case. Once I had him on the phone I stammered, and stumbled and delivered a string of stilted, confused sentences that did very little to make a convincing case for my idea. The poet listened graciously and after I paused to take a much-needed breath, advised me to: "Just do it."*

*I found out about Zajc's death after I returned to Ljubljana from a European tour. I had planned to start writing the songs that Autumn, but the tragic news wore hard on me and I began to think that it was best not proceed with the project. I felt that maybe it was too much of a responsibility without him around as a potential sounding board. I certainly did not want any of my own inadequacies as a songwriter or a musician to veil the beauty and fluency of his poems. My wife and a couple of friends softly pushed me to reconsider. But in the end, it was those three words that Zajc had said to me on the phone that led me forward. "Just do it."*

*Well, here it is. It is done. And if you find any shards of truth or magic inside these songs, they belong to the poet. The one who spoke with a tongue of soil.*

--Chris Eckman, Ljubljana, 2008