

CD REVIEW by Christopher Hislop

Great sense of humor, great music from Curt Bessette

What you have to love about Curt Bessette is the fact that his music has a sound and an appeal to it that caters to all ages. It's probably not intentional, but Bessette has such a Paul Simon-esque quality to his voice, and a soft hand when it comes to hittin' the strings on the acoustic guitar, that it just plain feels good to anybody's ears.

Mr. Bessette's latest offering, "95 North to Maine," is as much an ode to his home state, as it is a personal testament to enjoying life, and the stories that you can take from it.

Bessette has a great sense of humor, which is evident in the title track where he sings (as much John Prine as Paul Simon):

"The toll booth was backed up, so I used my cell phone / to finish some business through the office back home. / Two hours later we're still in the line, but when we cross that border, my life will be fine. / 95 North to the

great state of Maine / All of Massachusetts was thinking the same. / Cameras and coolers, iPods and beers, we're driving to heaven with a roof-rack from Sears." He's got a great tune entitled, "Daddy Came Home from WWII," about the travesties of war, and the wrath such an experience can have on a person's mental state, as well



The painting, "Allagash" by Norma Johnsen of Kennebunk, Maine, figures prominently on the cover of Curt Bessette's new CD, "95 North to Maine." We're sure we'll get a real copy (of the CD, not the painting) soon!

WHAT Curt Bessette with vocalist Kathleen Soldati
WHEN Friday, Feb. 27, 8:30 p.m.
WHERE Hilton-Garden Inn, 100 High St., Portsmouth
CONTACT www.curtbessette.com, 431-1499

as a one entitled "Ray Chapman and Carl Mays," about one of only two players to ever have been killed in a Major League Baseball game. Bessette cites World War II and baseball as life interests of his, which he reads and writes about extensively,

and with great passion. It's fun to hear these stories through Bessette's approach to writing songs, and both of these tunes are very powerful in their delivery. It's not often that one song on an album can send shivers up and down your spine, and it's pretty much unheard of, to have two. Bessette has that going for him... Another

feel-good family-oriented characteristic of "95 North to Maine," is the fact that Curt has tapped a couple of his own family members to perform on the disc, including his brother Mike (bass), and daughter Jennifer (vocal harmonies), among a great cast of other supporting musicians that really bring this record to life.

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Return to soul with sparkling debut album

"Listen now! ..." barks Jesse Dee as the opening of his debut album "Bittersweet Batch," and its first track "Alright." Right out of the gate, he's got you hooked. His music, a thick batch of heartfelt soul, is one of the most refreshing recordings to come out locally in quite a long time.

"I can see that you've had enough of this monotony. / You're sick and tired of being sick and tired of the same scenery. / You're running in a rut, stuck in the same routine. / You go to bed every night, and then you wake up to do it all over again." While



the lyrics in this opening cut might be suggestive of that of a working relationship, and the woes that circulate around every life from

WHAT Jesse Dee
WHERE The Press Room, 77 Daniel St., Portsmouth
WHEN Friday, Feb. 27, 9 p.m.
COST \$5
CONTACT 431-5186, www.pressroomnh.com

time to time; it's about to be taken out of context just a smidge to be offered in the following light — Jesse Dee is striving to spread something different amongst our local music culture. He's taking a style of music that hasn't really been a mainstay in today's world; but he's made a statement that soul music is in fact legitimate, and it's time to welcome it back with open arms.

"Bittersweet Batch" is an introduction to a musician that one can only hope is around for a very, very long time. Every tune on the record cuts deep but leaves you feeling great, leaves you feeling revived. In other words, this record was

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Celtic art opening on Sunday (with music!)

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 opening in addition to a performance from Stewart later in the afternoon.

"These paintings represent my own emotions so deeply, I think of them as self-portraits of my instinctive, intuitive self ... simple and fully present. I think of these moments not as frozen in time, but fondly bookmarked for repeated visits."

For information, visit www.elizabethstewartart.com, www.elysiumarts.com/folkclub and call 743-4700.

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