

ERNIE HENDRICKSON'S NEW ALBUM, *ROLL ON*, COMING ON [date] VIA [label]; PRODUCED BY BRIAN DECK IN CHICAGO WITH A STELLAR ROSTER OF STUDIO MUSICIANS, AND FEATURING THIRTEEN NEW SONGS BY THE ACCLAIMED AMERICAN SONGWRITER

*Six years after releasing his 2013 Nashville-recorded album One for the Dreamers, Americana singer-songwriter and guitarist Ernie Hendrickson returns to his Chicago home with Roll On, his most mature, observant and musically wide ranging collection*

CHICAGO--It was six years ago that Ernie Hendrickson, who was born in the Wisconsin region known as the Driftless Area and raised in Illinois, released his last album, *One for the Dreamers*. Hendrickson, who recorded *One for the Dreamers* in the fabled city of Nashville with producer Chad Cromwell and a cast of musicians that included legendary Willie Nelson harmonica wizard Mickey Raphael and harmony singer Lera Lynn, took away the myriad lessons of Music City, and the record displayed his songwriting savvy, guitar acumen and feel for the American language.

But Hendrickson regrouped, and changed, after his Nashville experience, which found him spending time in the city while returning home to Chicago. The results of his newfound maturity are evident on his new album *Roll On*, which he recorded in his home town with producer Brian Deck, himself known for giving a sonic sheen to records by Iron & Wine and Counting Crows. In addition, Hendrickson made the call to record *Roll On* live off the floor with a group of sympathetic musicians, with minimal overdubs. He performed the vocals live in the control booth, giving the album an energetic, unstudied feel that gains power from Deck's immaculate production. It's a triumphant return for one of Americana's finest singers and songwriters.

*Roll On* displays Ernie's ability to tackle weighty themes with humor and a sharp eye for the details that make his songs humane and compelling. Influenced by everyone from Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter to Nashville humorist and songwriter Todd Snider, Ernie wrote a set of songs for *Roll On* that address the commercialization and alienation of American life. One song, "Dystopian Dreams," makes explicit the looming political and social crises that characterize American life in 2019, but he gives the song an optimistic spin that comes from his new role as father to a young daughter, and as a family man who likes to spend time at home when he's not on the road doing what musicians do to make a living.

It's a diverse set of songs, with the opener, "Do It for Love," describing a normal day in the life of a city-dweller and turning it into an affirmation of the mundane joys of taking the train and shopping at your favorite record store. The Roy Orbison-style song "One Day of Life" folds in everyday hassles like traffic jams and checkout lines, but Ernie remains happy about the transitory joys of life.

With Brian Deck spurring Ernie to refine his songwriting--one song, "New Midwestern Winter Blues," was begun in 2013 during a particularly challenging Chicago winter and finished five

years later as the album began to be recorded--*Roll On* is the apotheosis of the art of a great American songwriter. The album has its heavy themes, too, as in "Standing Like a Rock," in which he sings: "They want it all/And they're coming for it/Sucking the life out of the land/It's way past time to make a stand." It's a crunching riff-rocker in the tradition of John Mellencamp or Bruce Springsteen, with touches of Todd Snider evident in its sardonic approach.

Ably aided by guitarist and pedal steel player Brian Wilkie, bassist Pete Muschong, drummer Gerald Dowd and keyboardist John Kattke, Hendrickson plays biting electric guitar and beautifully phrased acoustic on *Roll On*. The Randy Newman-meets-Dixieland horn arrangements are by Matt Ulery, who is Ernie's brother-in-law. The album covers a lot of ground, and gives a portrait of a Midwestern reality that Ernie knows first-hand. It's his most far-ranging work to date, and proves that going home is always a possibility when you're as grounded and observant as Ernie Hendrickson.

Ernie Hendrickson is, as you will hear when you give *Roll On* a listen, one of American music's bright lights. He's illuminated his way throughout his career, and *Roll On* shines a light into areas that in other hands would remain shrouded in darkness. He's grown exponentially since his last album, and *Roll On* is a testament to what maturity means when it co-exists with the yearning to describe the truth that the best American artists have always sought, in their own ways.

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