

COUNTRY

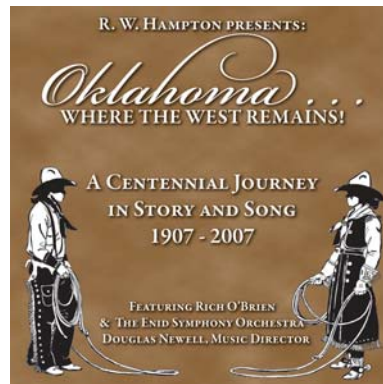
MUSIC PEOPLE

CD REVIEWS

CD OF THE MONTH

R.W. Hampton

Oklahoma... Where The West Remains!



Where The West Remains Overture / Intro To The Story / Where The West Remains / Before The Journey / The Journey / Run Of The Cherokee Outlet / Native People / Words On The Talking Leaves / Keeper Of The Plains / Up The Trail To Kansas / A Cowboy I Will Stay / Wick Doss / Wish I'd Stayed In Jail / Cowboys / 101 Ranch Cowboy / Always The Weather / Dusty Skies / What Beautiful Country / Oklahoma Hills / Faith / On Jordan's Stormy Banks / It's Worth Coming Home / Oklahoma Towns / Bob Wills / We've Taken Bob Back To Texas / Legends & Icons / Will Rogers' Last Flight / The Beauty Of The State / The Everlasting Hills Of Oklahoma / Freedom Isn't Free / For The Freedom / Where The West Remains: Finale / Where The West Remains: Soliloquy

Producer: Richard E. O'Brien

Cimarron Sounds CS1107-2

1:08:06

With its sub heading of "A Centennial Journey In Story And Song", and let's be honest here, not the most inspiring piece of artwork ever to grace an album cover, I have to admit I feared the worst with this release. I expected cheesy, in fact I expected squirry cheese in a can. I didn't expect a fine Stilton. So the cd sat around for a while until I felt I really ought to give it a spin... and WOW! I guess I should have paid more attention to Rich O'Brien's name on the cover. This, it turns out, is a phenomenal piece of edutainment, and is now available in the UK via Proper.

Whether speaking or singing, R.W. Hampton has one of those voices which is authoritative but not condescending, and just makes you want to listen. I now know more about Oklahoma than I ever intended knowing. The project is presented in such a way, that, as the listener, you are transported along the timeline of what is often referred to (when trying to bait an Okie) as "North Texas", although my house is at least 50 years older than the state.

This is done with a combination of songs and a spoken introduction (as a separate track) to many of the songs about its relevance to Oklahoma or its place in history. Tales of settlers, cattle drives, Native Americans, ranching, hills (Oklahoma Hills of course), jail, and Oklahoman heroes like Bob Wills are what this is about.

R.W. Hampton is one of America's foremost cowboy entertainers, an actor (having appeared in a dozen Western movies, and let me tell you

he looks the part with his handlebar moustache), he has also co-written and starred in a one-man play, *The Last Cowboy*, and won eleven awards from various Western associations, and he handles this project with enthusiasm and obvious pride.

Musically stunning in every way, from the emotive opening symphonic overture, through traditional sounding cowboy songs, straight country, to superior Western Swing this is a quality production. The majority of the songs are originals from Edna Mae Holden (whose idea spawned the project), Richard O'Brien, or Hampton (or a combination of them) and are entirely suited to the mood, but Jack and Woody Guthrie's *Oklahoma Hills* swings like never before and Cindy Walker's *Dusty Skies* showcases her writing at its most Western. Rich O'Brien's *We've Taken Bob Back To Tulsa* is probably the greatest tribute to the King Of Western Swing and has been recorded several times but here is the definitive version.

This is not going to be for everyone, and could still be considered cheesy in some quarters, but I was moved, enthralled and really, really need to visit Oklahoma. Job done as far as all involved are concerned. Even the narrations stand up to repeated listening but I guess you could always select just the songs to go onto your iPod. The West remains in capable hands.

Duncan Warwick

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