

Rylan Greaves – Lawn Crypt – Reviewed by Drew Jarvie (The Delerium Trees / AMJ Music)

Rylan Greaves is clearly influenced by Scotland's history especially the folklore of Cromarty and its churchyards. Most old churchyards or graveyards conjure up imagery of peacefulness but if you can read the gravestones, you can see that many have died because of disease, rebellion, poor living conditions, certainly makes me wonder what's the background story. It certainly made Rylan wonder, hence **Lawn Crypt**.

The opening track, **Woo'd**, opens in an almost medieval vocal style, bare harmonies immediately giving the music an 'eerie feel'. This is further enhanced by the low bass pedal – very long note (think didgeridoo), on top of which a lonely piano plays an almost rubato, in its own time, solo. Virginia Radcliffe adds a lovely counter melody adding hopeful texture in the musical mist.

The **Interlude** is a short thirty-three second piano piece, a Coda to **Woo'd**, which immediately reminded me of Mercury Rev, beautifully spacious in character it also acts an introduction to the next track, **Cradle Song**

Sparse accompaniment heightens the tension in the traditional tale of babies being dragged to the underworld, quite often at prehistoric sites or on this occasion, a church. The lonely vocal and the accompaniment helping create the uselessness of the baby's position, will the child come back, or as is more likely has a neighbouring tribe stolen the infant.

I Know Who Killed Me relaxes the musical tension with a more traditional piano accompaniment to Rylan's vocal. The vocal representing the murdered victim, looking for justice, nobody can hear as the ghost speaks to the fresh air. Luckily the listener can hear so at least someone heard the tale.

Black Gold/Dust sees the piano return with various sounds providing a picture of scenes around Cromarty. I think the black gold referred is oil, Invergordon is in the area, the sound of the sea, gulls cry, the wheels of industry turn. A reflective piece on the goods and evils of so-called progress.

We reach **What Used To Stand Here**, with harmonium and organ providing the main accompaniment to the sorrowful melodic line. Memories of what once was, beauty replaced by concrete jungles, honour replaced by greed.

This is a truly atmospheric collection of songs very much in the realms of Talk Talk's albums *Spirit of Eden* and *Laughing Stock*, or a Boards of Canada song with vocals. Karl Jenkins a clear comparison and Chris Thompson (*The Bathers*) as well. The big difference, the use of ancient history and folklore, folk music certainly delves into this influence so it is to Rylan's credit that his use of sparse accompaniment, and lonely melody paints a picture that needs to be listened to.