

Pierce Pettis: Chase The Buffalo

While Pettis has always had talented artists in previous releases, including the likes of Mac McAnally, Fergus Marsh (Bruce Cockburn), Claude McKnight (Take Six) and the late folk/rock legend Mark Heard, the supporting cast on this recording is especially impressive. It includes legendary drummer Jim Keltner and producer/bassist David Miner (formerly of the Alpha Band and associate producer of Elvis Costello's King of American). The other musical guests here include David Hidalgo from Los Lobos, John Jorgenson of the Desert Rose Band and, hot off Bruce Cockburn's Nothing But a Burning Light release, the Bob Dylan anniversary concert and the Presidential inauguration, keyboardist Booker T. Jones, whom Pettis refers to as "the coolest guy I ever met in my entire life."

Even with such a heavyweight lineup, the recording has a fresh live sound, with no cosmetic studio trickery; above all, it is still Pettis' songs and voice that remain the center of attention. And Pettis has never been so happy with the songs he has written. "We actually dropped a couple of good songs because I ended up writing some better ones while we were recording."

In addition to his own songs, Pettis also does a fine reworking of Mark Heard's "Nod Over Coffee." He shows off his collaborative songwriting skills as well on "No More Sad Songs," co-written with Bill Haughey and Jonathan Edwards. The song traces the weary trail of the itinerant musician who misses his family after long stays on the road. Pettis explores the lives, history and customs of his native Appalachia on "Appalachian Bloodlines" and uses southwestern imagery to form a compelling study of his own creative odyssey on the title cut, "Chase the Buffalo." "I Will Be Here," near the end of the recording, is one of the best songs about friendship since, well, James Taylor's interpretation of Carole King's "You've Got A Friend," while "Stickman," a haunting piece about the AIDS epidemic, is a song listeners will not soon forget. What these songs have in common is the energy, passion and sincerity of an artist at the height of his powers.

"There is music in all this
It is all material
Before the beauty melts like snow
Chase the Buffalo"