

Reviews and Selected General Press 4/18/2006

Reviews – *Quietly There* (Nov. 2004 release)



Smother.Net E-zine, Nov. 2004

EDITOR'S PICK “Well it’s not going to be ‘quietly there’ for much longer for Tracy Jane Comer. This singer/songwriter is key to moving the whole darn genre forward. Her sound is mature and soaked with talent throughout this dynamic take of contemporary acoustic rock that’s not afraid to plug things in on occasions. Rather than a brooding self-obsessed nuance of an album that so many of her fellow musicians put out, ‘Quietly There’ is an upbeat swingin’ album that sheds pathos for a brighter side of things.

Soon I have no doubt that Wisconsin will be known for more than just cheese and Brett Favre’s Packers - they’ll be known as the lynchpin holding the doors open to soft rock in the singer/songwriter format. Superb.”

E.O.M. (Evolution of Media) E-zine, Dec. 2004

“...Good lyric writing has become something of a lost art in the mainstream and it's encouraging to see that there are artists who take their craft seriously. Tracy Jane Comer, if her second album *Quietly There* is any indication, is such an artist. In the tradition of people like Joni Mitchell, Suzanne Vega, Rickie Lee Jones and the Indigo Girls, Tracy Jane Comer writes songs of different shades and colors: a hybrid I've dubbed ‘chamber folk’ as in her fine cover of the Beatles’ ‘Eleanor Rigby’ and originals ‘Take Me To The Mountain’ and ‘Quietly There’; and a kind of folky jazz that shines through in ‘My Own History’ and ‘Just One Person.’

Tracy has a clear, highly emotional voice that brings out the best in her words and gives one a feeling of emotional uplift that epitomizes only the greatest music (the aforementioned women for one set of examples, and unsung singers like Carlene Carter and Christy McWilson for a couple more examples).

The lyrical and emotional jackpot on *Quietly There* is achieved by ‘This Losing Game,’ as potent an anti-war song as I've heard this year and right up there in the 2004 protest pantheon with Tom Waits and R.E.M. Give Tracy's album a spin, if for nothing other than ‘This Losing Game.’”

GoGirlsMusic.com, Apr. 2005

It’s no surprise that Tracy Jane Comer is a nominee for Best Acoustic Album by the 2005 Madison Area Music Awards. With such an intense talent, this folk singer is destined for great things! Tracy Jane Comer was touched by a beautiful gift of music. Her passion, pure emotion and mellifluous flowing voice blend this work of art for pure pop/folk music. Tracy is not keeping a muted silence in her release, “Quietly there”; instead she’s pulling all the stops in this toe-tapping delight! She’s creating her own “herstory” in this CD, so all we can do is sit back, relax and let her overcome us with her talent!

Hit Picks: “Take Me to the Mountain” and “This Losing Game”

SongsAlive! April 2006

“What a delight to kick back and listen to these 14 beautifully produced and compelling tracks, that ebb and flow from fast to slow, complimenting the songwriting and voice of Tracy Jane Comer. While each song has it's own breath of life, Tracy Jane's voice is as diverse on each track as the story told. Nominated for Best Acoustic Album for 2005 by the Madison Music Awards in Wisconsin, this album really delivers touching melodies, powerful vocals and textured arrangements as well as bare to the bones acoustic style that capitalize on the Tracy Jane's diverse ability to tell a good story with her fresh lyrics. (There are instrumental tracks, ‘Rondo’ and ‘Moving in the Right Direction,’ so no lyrics there if you're looking for them!) The title track, ‘Quietly There,’ is ‘so ready for radio’ with a dynamic yet emotional vocal and full production to enhance the lyrics that sent chills up my spine. From the rousing start of ‘My Own History,’ to the reflective end track of ‘Drive for Miles,’ Tracy Jane Comer packs a wallop of sound in between - including a daring cover of the Beatles ‘Eleanor Rigby’ - with strings to highlight the intense social commentary of the words from two of the great songwriters of our time, Lennon and McCartney. But this 3rd cd release from Tracy Jane Comer is all about her talent and songwriting artistry - the ability to tell a story and sing it with conviction and love.

‘Quietly There’ might be the title, but Tracy Jane Comer is due to make some very loud noise once these songs are heard and be ‘Internationally Here.’”

Kweevak's Tracks (Kweevak.com), Mar. 2005

“Tracy is a singer, songwriter and instrumentalist proficient on cello, fiddle, guitar and piano. Comer has been compared to Joni Mitchell, Dar Williams and other well-known talents. The comparisons are well deserved as Tracy is a versatile vocalist who writes compelling, visual songs. Although her music is acoustic based the arrangements go much deeper, culling from classical, folk, jazz, pop and rock. *Quietly There* features thirteen originals and a poignant cover of The Beatles ‘Eleanor Rigby’. Randy Green is responsible for the crisp, clean production allowing each instrument to come through as Tracy's rich vocals flow to the top. Randy also co-wrote some of the songs and plays guitars and keyboards. Other stellar guest players contribute drums, percussion, harp, dulcimer and sax. Unlike some acoustic records that rely on a few simple chords, Comer's work is diverse and dynamic. Upon each listen more subtle sounds and styles unfold. Comer's music ranges from spirited instrumentals such as ‘Movin' in the Right Direction’ to beautiful ballads such as ‘My Own History’ and ‘Yellow Bike’ — a glimmering song about growing up poor but still enjoying life. Tracy Jane Comer is a musical force and *Quietly There* ranges from intimate storytelling to animated arrangements!” *Recommended Tracks:* (1,2,4)

**Music Maker Magazine, July/July 2005, Issue No. 85
(UK print publication)**

"In your mind, take yourself across the pond for a moment and stick the point of your compasses in the town of Madison, Wisconsin. Draw a circle with a radius of 150 miles and you'll find the stamping ground of Tracy Jane Comer.

Originally from North Carolina, Tracy has established a reputation in the Lake Michigan area, gigging extensively and appearing on local radio and TV broadcasts. Forays outside her home base would it seem have been only occasional.

This may not be the case much longer as this is an excellent second album. I haven't actually heard the first but "Quietly There" is certainly a musically mature product. The front cover shows a photo of Tracy "A la country diva" like Faith Hill or Chely Wright but one only has to play the first few tracks to be struck by the excellent musicianship and variety of style on offer. She has absorbed influences from across the musical spectrum - folk, country, pop, jazz, classical - she is a graduate of music and the classical influence shows through both in the economy and use of musical structures. Tracy writes her own songs and is not content to use just the standard verse/chorus pattern.

She plays guitar, keyboard, violin and cello (all excellently) and uses her voice as another instrument in the texture, double tracking very effectively in places.

She is ably assisted by her co-writer and producer Randy Green who has not only enhanced the songs by contributions on guitar and keyboard but also produced the album with clarity and just the right balance. The line up is completed by bass and drums which do a good job on underpinning the songs and some unusual touches like the use of a hammer dulcimer.

Tracy's lyric writing is very clever - she paints with words using light and shade most effectively - the output is, in general, more optimistic than many of the current crop of singer songwriters, although she is equally able to explore the darker and more brooding side of human emotion, while in other places injecting some wry humour.

The opening track 'My Own History' is a jazzy number all about setting one's own agenda - the jazz influence returns later on 'Just One Person' which starts off with a clever Bruebeck style five/four intro. 'Yellow Bike' is a folksy piece of nostalgia about childhood in the seventies when life was much poorer but much simpler. 'This Losing Game' is a poignant anti-war song, difficult to say anything original in this genre, yet the view from the personal perspective makes it work. (I love the cello on this!) 'Movin' in the Right Direction' and 'Rondo' showcase sensitive yet powerful playing of her Taylor guitar. 'Pathetic Fallacy' puts me in mind a bit of Dar Williams' 'Calling the Moon'; 'Drive for Miles' makes clever use of analogy.

The title track is a real belter - a pop ballad with a great hook on the chorus. I could just imagine one those big duets with Elton John or Hal Ketchum on this. Could easily do big things given the right amount of airplay. Tracy wrote or co-wrote all of the material except 'Eleanor Rigby' - this was a good choice to include as it suits the style of the backing musicians on the album.

An excellent musician and writer - it would be good if she could climb aboard a jumbo and visit these shores sometime!"

Rick's Café Magazine, Dec. 2004

"Tracy Jane Comer's *Quietly There* is a stunning showcase of both her lovely voice and her impressive skill on a variety of instruments. Comparisons to other adult contemporary artists such as Mary Chapin Carpenter, Shawn Colvin, and Dar Williams are inevitable, though she displays more range of style than any of them. Which means that anyone who picks up this CD expecting standard adult contemporary fare will likely be thrown by the jazz of 'My Own History,' the classical-leaning piano and full orchestral swell of 'Pathetic Fallacy,' or the two gorgeous finger-picked instrumentals 'Movin' in the Right Direction' and 'Rondo.' Given her background in everything from classical to rock, including theater, choral, sacred and folk, the spectrum of genres covered shouldn't be a surprise.

[Randy Green's] production is full and smooth, ensuring every instrument is heard regardless of how many are in the mix. Credited as co-writer on six tracks, he also contributes guitars and keyboards. The guest musicians, Rock Williams (drums and percussion), Steve Kasprzak (upright bass), Bryan Husk (tenor saxophone), Candace Kreitlow (harp), Katie Waldren (hammered dulcimer), are all well used. Williams in particular makes an impression on the childhood snapshot 'Yellow Bike,' a vivid recounting that recalls [Dar] Williams' 'The Ocean.' His hand-drum work propels without overpowering...

Originally from North Carolina, [Tracy] has made herself at home in the Wisconsin music scene. She is also a favorite and frequent guest of the local media such as radio's WORT and Wisconsin Public Radio, and TV's *Urban Theater* (UPN14) and *Worth Watching* and *Perpetual Commotion* on WYOU...

This record is a strong statement that seems determined to reach beyond a local audience."

Music Shopper Forum (Based in UK), May 2005

Our Rating: 90 out of 100

"...A multi-instrumentalist singer-songwriter, Tracy Jane is a long way from the manufactured unit-shifters we are all so sick of - a serious and talented performer, she has put this together with the help of producer Randy Green, a couple of decent session musicians, and almost nobody else. On this basis alone, this album is an impressive achievement. But it does more than just take an independent stand against the major labels. Opener 'My Own History' is a bit of a red herring - a cheerfully up-tempo Cajun track... From here on, things pick up no end with a well-judged blend of ballads, instrumentals and harder-edged moments, featuring some genuinely first-rate writing and production. And there really are some cracking tracks on here - the Hammond-driven attitude of 'Baggage' is tremendous... The country/jazz crossover of 'Just One Person' is similarly impressive, its complex 5/4 rhythm and plaintive saxophone work succeeding where many a proper jazz recording has failed. There is real power, too, in ballads like 'This Losing Game', a long, slow-burning effort that builds and builds with startling proficiency... The only non-original track, a cover of 'Eleanor Rigby', kind of sums the album up, really... it is a fantastic version, retaining the strings but adding tastefully to the original ideas... a very worthy alternative. The same goes for much of the other material - it's not quite as radical as the stuff being created by the alt-country crowd, but for all its comfortable familiarity, it is exceptionally well done, in the same way that Nanci Griffith or Alison Krauss albums tend to be... I can honestly say that this will be getting a healthy number of repeat plays. And that is a very, very pleasant surprise."

Indie-Music.com, Feb. 2005

FEATURED ARTIST This woman never does anything halfway. No one will ever accuse Tracy Jane Comer of holding back. A song may start quietly, and you may think you know where it's going, but then it rises and fills the air with added notes from a cello or sax and wraps itself around you. Even the sad songs lift the spirit because of the magic in the sound.

And the voice isn't half bad, either. Comer can sound pure and angelic on classical compositions like "Take Me to the Mountain" and "Silent Care" -- on the latter, her voice rises at times like a cry to the heavens and dips smoothly down at others like a whisper to the ocean. In tracks like "Just One Person," she is steamy and seductive, a vibe enhanced by the vintage instruments (stand-up bass, tenor sax) weaving old-school jazz around her voice.

About halfway through the CD, she suddenly takes a very 60s protest approach and wraps it in those magic chord progressions and the mournful sound of the cello, creating a pointed, emphatic anti-war song called "This Losing Game."

At times, she turns off the vocal mic and lets the music capture the listener completely. My personal favorite of the instrumentals is "Movin' in the Right Direction," an ambling, acoustic stroll down a country road. As for the others, "Yellow Bike" is a standout. It's a lovely folk ballad about a childhood of imagination and happiness despite the poverty. There's magic in the reminiscing and the warm acoustic chords. I like how she works in a few lines about looking back at it from an adult's perspective:

I wonder why I just can't understand/why I'm sad that I was happy then ... But I don't think that it occurred to me/Life wasn't all that it should be ... we just lived ...

Comer can belt out anthems of independence and quietly croon songs of reflection and philosophy. And she puts every musical possibility into those songs, adding more voices to give more depth to the harmony, switching to a minor key to take the song in a new direction, dropping to a near-whisper for dramatic effect. Each song has its own subtle majesty. She's probably an obsessive perfectionist in the studio, but everyone involved can probably forgive her when the result is this unforgettable."

B Section (Madison Songwriters Group), Mar. 2005

"MSG member Tracy Jane Comer has more than a beautiful voice; she's also a great instrumentalist. She plays the guitar, cello and piano with great skill. This record successfully showcases her musical touch, with a lineup of great backing instrumentalists....Comer has a way with ballads, and puts them forward with ease and charm...This is a most excellent album, a job well done and an album Comer should feel proud to shop around."

Midwest Bands.com, March 2005

Musicianship: 9.5 out of 10: The musicianship on Quietly There is near perfection. Tracy Jane Comer has incredible guitar skills as well as those who accompanied her on this disc. Her acoustic guitar sings as crystal clearly as her voice; if the entire disc was just Tracy on her instrument, it would be well worth listening to. (Rondo) is a prime example of that. She plays a mean cello, too! Vocally, Tracy cannot be pegged. Her voice is distinct; however, for the sake of the review I will tell you the 3 very different artists that crossed my mind while listening. First, (Yellow Bike, Hello) she has the vocal sound comparable to a young Joni Mitchell (think 'Both Sides Now' and you'll see what I mean) which gives her vocals a bit of a retro feel at times. Her voice also has the haunting quality (Take Me to the Mountain) similar to Maire Brennan (Clannad - Enya's sister) and finally she has a more contemporary Sarah McLachlan feel to her music (Baggage, Eleanor Rigby). Now, if that doesn't confuse you and make you want to hear for yourself, I don't know what will.

Songwriting - 10 out of 10: Tracy's biggest talent, however, lies in her incredible songwriting (thus is the only reason for the 9.5 in the Musicianship section!). From complex melodies and lyrics (Pathetic Fallacy) to simpler 'catchy' tunes (My Own History) her versatility is endless. There is a cover of Lennon & McCartney's 'Eleanor Rigby' right in the middle of all of Tracy's originals and honestly, her songwriting holds up excellently! Intelligent, interesting and moving are words that come to mind.

Sound Quality/Professionalism - 10 out of 10: There isn't really too much I need to elaborate on in this section. It is an extremely professionally produced Indie album. Everything sounds balanced and complimentary and the songs are arranged in a very appealing order. Great job.

Packaging: 9.5++ out of 10: The packaging of Quietly There is well done. A few pictures of Tracy, acknowledgement, credits, and BEST OF ALL: LYRICS! It's so wonderful to be able to read every word and see as well as hear the incredible songwriting skills of Tracy.

Overall Rating: 10+ out of 10: Rather high rating, I know. I guess I feel the need to stress the depth and care that went into Quietly There by high numbers, because musical talent is so hard to put into words at times. Tracy Jane Comer's compositions are poetic, melodic, moving, thought provoking and soothing to the spirit. To me, that means she has achieved great success in creating this wonderful art known as music. She seems to possess all qualities she needs to achieve great success in her chosen profession. However, you don't have to just take my word for it. In fact, Quietly There is up for 'Best Acoustic Album' in the upcoming Madison (WI) Area Music Awards (to be held March 26, 2005). Hmm. Maybe I am not crazy after all!

International Acoustic Music Awards, Jan. 2005

"Tracy Jane Comer's song 'This Losing Game' is a thoughtful, well-produced and haunting anti-war song, worthy of the great Joan Baez or Joni Mitchell. Come to think of it, Tracy Jane's voice is just as powerful and clear as those ladies as well. This is a wonderful work and worthy of a good listen. Visit her website at www.tracyjanecomer.com to see her schedule and to pick up a few great tunes."

Reviews – Second Wind (Nov. 2002 release)

B Section (Madison Songwriters Group), Apr. 2003



"*Second Wind* is an impressive achievement... Tracy uses her clear, pure vocals and fine guitar work to good effect on these thirteen tracks of contemporary folk... Throughout the disc, Tracy shows off a deft touch on the guitar and good use of cello, hammered dulcimer and various percussion instruments. Her voice may be the best instrument though, always well-toned and showing a nice melisma that isn't overused... The sound quality is quite good... the vocals and instruments are crisp and clear throughout... We should all look forward to her next disc and hope it won't be long in coming."

Splendid E-zine, Mar. 2004

"...[*Second Wind* is] soothing and expertly produced, without a wrong note in the thing..."

WYOU-TV Madison, Oct. 2003

"[*Second Wind*] is a really good recording. It's on par with anything you can buy done by the big studios, and I was very impressed with the quality of the young lady who is on it. So I said, 'Come on down, we'll do a show,' and she said, 'Sure.'"

-Dennis Fawcett, Host of Worth Watching

Selected General Press/Media Quotes



"...Tracy Jane Comer grew up in NC and her roots of ingrained respect and hospitality (as well as a hint of accent) come through her conversation and music as well... Onstage she humbly switches instruments as she sets up the next song with some personal background. Her respect for the audience and unassuming nature indicate how it is she would like to be seen: as a talented multi-instrumentalist and vocalist who is rightly matched with her competent business sense and who is aptly using her God-given talents fruitfully."

-Terry Corr, Midwest Folk Magazine Winter 2004 issue, in introduction to feature article/interview with Tracy

"Tracy Jane Comer's sparkling acoustic folk is reminiscent of classic balladeers like Joan Baez, complete with lyrics that combines social consciousness with personal issues. But Comer's willingness to expand her sound with such elements as harp, dulcimer, and percussion gives her songs a depth that many folkies lack. MTV recently used a track from Comer's second album, 2004's *Quietly There*, as soundtrack material for their reality show *Made*, which should hopefully expand her fanbase beyond the folk-club circuit."

-The Onion, Jan. 2006

"Add this name to the list of singer-songwriter sages that includes Nanci Griffith, Dar Williams, and Patty Larkin. A perennial local fave in Madison, WI, Comer--who also records with the group *Sticky Fingers*--earns deserved plaudits for her spare, wistful lyrics and crisp, folky guitar. "

-Editor's Pick - Download.com

"[Tracy] is already showing signs of future success as a multi-flavored contemporary acoustic talent."

-Madison Folk Music Society Newsletter, July 2004

"Tracy's voice is warm, rich...she's a polished performer..."

-Jonathan Overby, Host of Higher Ground (WI Public Radio)

"Comer's thoughtful, intelligent and sometimes humorous songs, coupled with her clear, honest voice and heartfelt presentation, are a delight to the ears and offer a refreshing and satisfying musical alternative."

-The Clayton (NC) News-Star, August 2002

"...Tracy is a rare talent with touches of Kate Rusby, Gillian Welch and Joan Baez...There is something about Tracy's music that really sticks in my mind. Perhaps it's because she actually has something to say. "

-Paul Pinfield, CalmCast Podcast, UK

"Tracy Jane Comer's music can be described as acoustically superb. Her mesmerizing vocals, poetic lyrics, along with her skills on piano and guitar yield an extremely enjoyable mix."

-MusicPlaces.com