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Mr. Rick Parnell can easily be called a minimalist. Whereas nowadays CDs can easily contain up to 80 minutes of playing time, his sparse debut "One Eye Open" comes to a meager 23:12 minutes, distributed over 6 songs. While musicians these days prefer to adorn their compositions with hundreds of scores and timbres, all that this Calgary-born Canadian needs is his voice and a couple of guitars.

However, he does not make a muddle of it and mixes what he has really well. He's not at all frugal with genre definitions. He labels his own music under the broad category of "contemporary folk rock" - which is undoubtedly true - but he adds as a subgenre the weak and ambiguous term of "alternative". Even when choosing the sources of his many inspirations he does not economize: "In the tradition of Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Donovan with a little Lennon, Harrison and even Johnny Cash mixed in for good measure". It would be quite interesting to know what the hell he means exactly by "a little Lennon". (A rather strange statement since Lennon measured 1.78 m in height).

What most differentiates the six songs from each other may be their ability to serve as prescription-free relaxants. With rather cheerful lightness, Parnell manages to instantly launch the mood of the listener into the depths of the basement. While one of the songs merely causes a damn-this-dreary-summer mood (I'm Coming Home), another induces a full-blown depressive experience (Coexistence), whereas Everybody's Wrong provides a quick stopover in happyland.

There is no doubt that Rick Parnell understands his art. Because of the sparse arrangements, it is his songs - and nothing else - that rise to the fore. Whereas other musical works are overloaded with wild sensationalism and pretentious sounds, he leaves enough room for the listener to play an intimate role in his stories and moods. Sometimes less is actually more.

A master like the afore-mentioned Johnny Cash previously demonstrated this with his "American Recordings". Writing with such passion and intensity while performing with such simplistic restraint requires the unerring marksmanship attributable to the Rifleman Lin McAdam.

The production itself is clear, although not entirely balanced. In fact, there are some slight variations in the volume of Rick's voice (between the songs Coexistence and I'm Coming Home). Rick would also need to work on the pitch with which the songs begin. He clearly reaches his limits with a song like Coexistence. Nonetheless, this hardly affects the overall positive impression but may serve an explanation why he chose the subgenre "alternative".

Rick Parnell's music brings to mind the melancholic impressions of a desolate winter landscape that can only be cleared and brightened with the help of a bottle of Canadian Club. All music fans who have been waiting desperately for American Recordings VI will find at least a little solace in One Eye Open. I guess this is the biggest compliment you can make to the likeable Canadian Rick Parnell."