



Champion of Mystery, Mark Ransom

Produced by Mark Ransom and Linken Olson

Colleen Cordis-Keys and Vocals
 Mark Ransom-Vocals and Guitars
 Nick Papa-Drums
 Tyler Mason-Bass

by JUSTIN HYLAND WILLIAMS
 A&E Feature Writer

Upon first listen, one can almost smell the nag champa coming through the melting speakers. Is this *The Joy of Cooking* or Jefferson Starship? Truth is, *Champion of Mystery* is really more than Hippie rock - it's more Lou Reed meets The Range. If you stretched your imagination far back enough it's early Talking Heads played back at half speed. But that really depends on how many stamps you've licked.

What is really amazing about *Champion of Mystery* is what is missing. This Compact Disc actually sounds like a record.

Champion of Mystery isn't over produced-the sounds are comfortable like a favorite pair of slippers and smoking jacket. The jams take the listener to some familiar territories - that cave in Utah, a dusty Oregon country fair or another long road trip to shoreline in Dolemans bus -but with air conditioning.

Intimate, sticky, fumbling interplay between guitar and keys make for a dreamy, naked Sunday afternoon kind of backyard musical journey that transcends the musical space time continuum.

Lyricaly, this project tells an all too familiar beat tale of fortune chasing, fortune finding, hardship and ultimately enlightenment. The album boasts thirteen tracks with Lou Reed /Nico style prose and timing, coming through a young Marti Balin/Grace Slick windpipe set against interesting musical landscapes.

Champion of Mystery is dusty-funky yet a cohesive, mindful, relatively well organized, reflective introspective album, one to be played over and over. Perhaps because our protagonist, Willy Bova, for whom the title track's bells toll, is a modern Odysseus whose story appeals to the imaginations of the post-post beat generations.

Yet you really can't define this as jam rock. The most significant element of a jam band is that the music plays the band. I don't hear any of that in the rhythm section. There is a definitive driving force between drums and bass. Despite the obvious emphasis on guitar, keys and vocals, the rhythm section really holds this album together and gives it a kind of framework in which to qualify this musically. And that can best be described by you, the listener. I have done my job, this is new music.



Mark
 Ransom

Champion of Mystery