

Drink Deeply at the Carousel Lounge

"The conflict between the need for community and one's own longings can create a crucible of battling impulses, especially under the watchful eyes of a small town."

~C D Collins

C D Collins is a writer of poems, songs and stories, who was born and raised in Mt.



and as I understand it, are sometimes used to light up entire city blocks. Fortunately, in the case of C D Collins and her latest recording project, a poet has found a way of returning home to cast a unique light upon her ancestral land and her compelling kinfolk.

Though some twenty years has passed since she moved up North to become a Fire-eater in the big city cultural circus, much of Collins' creative soul has surely remained in the gentle, up and down farmlands that comprise her original home. To listen to her latest CD, (entitled: *Carousel Lounge*, the name of a favorite watering hole her parents used to frequent in the 50's and 60's), is to be made intimate with the writer's Eastern Kentucky origins and also the aforementioned "battling impulses and deepest longings." After a few rounds at the *Carousel Lounge*, the fortunate listener will come to feel that they are spending quality time with someone who is a naturally funny and gifted storyteller and better yet, they will feel as if they have been invited to go "back up to the house" and meet the storyteller's complicated family.

The project is the third collaboration between Collins and her Boston-based band, Rockabetty, who help to create and perform the various musical settings which background the sometimes spoken and sometimes

sung lyrics of *Carousel Lounge*. The musical territory is as varied as a really good jukebox and ranges from straight ahead Rock and Blues, back to traditional Old Time and forward to innovative soundscapes of deconstructed Bluegrass.

The most immediately charming song/poems on *Carousel Lounge* employ traditional music of the region and function as Collins' psycho-social-historical documentation of the people, the places, and her upbringing in rural Kentucky. Other tracks, which speak to contemporary issues like Mountain Top Removal and post-modern craziness, are designed to accomplish much more than wistful time-travel and good ol' down-home music making. These more innovative cuts use the spoken-word and musical ideas to create shadowy environments that heighten the dramatic qualities of the carefully crafted language and allow the poems to render their maximum effect, be it humor or pathos. The darker and more mysterious narratives deal with vulnerability and love. They are injected with an internal lucidity and an edginess, which comes from remembering keenly, how it all feels... the words stay on your skin.

The real force of *Carousel Lounge* comes from an acuteness of memory that seems to illuminate its subject from within. Collins creates a fine cocktail of human strengths and frailties and proves herself to be an astute blender of worlds, deftly mixing the micro with the macro, the local with the universal, and the comedic with the tragic.

In Lexington, you can find *Carousel Lounge* at Joseph-Beth Booksellers, in Mt. Sterling at Gallery for the Arts, or online at www.cdcollins.com. A portion of the proceeds from this project will be used in the effort to help stop Mountain Top Removal in our state.

Patrick McNeese is a musician and filmmaker who lives and works in Lexington.

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Grass, Roots & Rhythm

Jackson Higgins is on vacation. Sitting in this month is Patrick McNeese

Sterling, Kentucky and now lives in Boston, Massachusetts. She got her master's degree in English literature at UK and then taught school in the Montgomery County Public School System for several years. One fateful day a traveling circus came to town and the talented but restless, young English teacher... well, you know how the story goes, yet another loss to our chronically bereft state due to the widespread phenomenon 'Brain Drain.' Well, yes... but the loss of our poets and storytellers produces an even more destructive outcome known as 'Soul Drain', or its more sinister cousin 'Culture Top Removal.' In these spiritually erosive processes the native, preternatural resources of Kentucky are extracted in bulk and exported to big city markets. Apparently, in these more urbane environments, locally honed commodities, like insight, wit and complex metaphors better survive (or even flourish),

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