

ARTIST: CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL

[6/10/08]

Title: *Cosmo's Factory [Expanded Reissue]*

selection #FAN-30880-02

UPC = 888072308800

[BOOKLET] :

Cosmo's Factory was the fourth, biggest, and best of the astonishing string of five Top Ten albums Creedence Clearwater Revival released in 1969 and 1970. It went on sale in August 1970, well after two of its tracks had stormed radio--the No. 2 "Travelin' Band"/"Who'll Stop the Rain," which began its parabola in January, and the No. 4 "Up Around the Bend," released in April. But as Fantasy most certainly knew, there was a third hit in its grooves, the transcendent "Lookin' Out My Back Door"--the fifth and last No. 2 single for the preeminent pop phenomenon of its brief era, which never had a No. 1--and the album rode all four beloved songs to nine weeks atop Billboard's album chart. Not until February would the Christmas-keyed Pendulum yield the next single, and by then Creedence's pendulum was into its backswing.

I cite these stats not because I love them for themselves, although I do, but because they make clear what a different and comparatively innocent time the '60s-'70s cusp was. Five albums in two years! Singles, sometimes two-sided, tumbling merrily after each other every dozen weeks! Dominating AM radio on an independent label! And strangest of all, roots-rock pioneers a pop phenomenon! But these were the ways of Creedence's time, 15 years into the history of a music that has now lasted 45 even if John Fogerty and the many old-timers who still adore him don't believe the current stuff measures up. And they were the facts of Creedence's place, the Bay Area, where one of rock's most fabled revolutions was powered primarily by guys who'd been hanging at folk clubs five years before. Acid tripped these guys out, and because Creedence came through the ballrooms like every other San Francisco band, they accommodated the space-jam imperative in famous extended workouts on Dale Hawkins's "Susie Q" and Marvin Gaye's "I Heard It Through the Grapevine." But Fogerty's deepest love was the two-and-a-half-minute song of '50s rock and roll. The A-side of the "Susie Q" single ran all of 2:16.

Creedence's style is customarily slotted as "updated" rockabilly, and you can understand why. Unlike most ballroom hopefuls, Fogerty wasn't just a white boy trying to sing the blues--he was a white boy inventing his own white-boy blues. The instrumentation was held down to spare guitar-guitar-bass-drums, and his melodic and rhythmic materials were minimal as well. But there was a big difference from the halcyon days of Sun Studios--the difference between Carl Perkins's blue suede shoes and John Fogerty's flannel shirt. Fogerty had no taste for fashion, and no high-strung macho in him either. At his best, he didn't sing as if he had anything to prove. When he did--when the jealous sniping of more countercultural rivals combined with the dissension that is inevitable in all rock groups to nudge him toward (a) True Art and (b) True Democracy--Creedence was finished.

Supposedly, this isn't how rock and roll gets to Matter. Supposedly, the great rock and rollers engage in a drama of public self-definition; whatever their technical shortcomings, they make music as if their lives are at stake, and we respond in kind. And that's often the way it is. But not with Fogerty. Again, this was not a guy who snuck back to rock and roll from the coffeehouses. He'd been a rocker since junior high school, a touring musician since before he was 20. Yet there was more of what the folkies were after in his terse, grounded metaphors, not to mention his raceless drawl with its eerie high end, than in all the era's yearning poetry and doleful cries. Maybe he wasn't a natural--that category is a sham. But he sure seemed like one. That's why today's alt-country strivers regard him as a god--and why they try to imitate him the way coffeehouse types tried to imitate Mississippi John Hurt and Charley Poole.

Harder than the relentlessly songful Willy and the Poor Boys, simpler than the surprisingly durable Pendulum, Cosmo's Factory opens with "Ramble Tamble," a rave-up that sounds contentless until you notice that its few lyrics list everyday oppressions--crap and mortgages everywhere except on the corner, where there are cops, and the White House, where (in 1970) there are actors. On this album, that's the strategy. Beyond the borderline-sappy

"Who'll Stop the Rain" (the greatest weakness of Fogerty's oeuvre is that he never wrote a song praising what makes the crops grow), the only other title that essays explicit social commentary is a second relatively tuneless choogle, "Run Through the Jungle." Yet the fast-moving celebrations Top 40 loved--"Travelin' Band"'s rough-and-ready road moments, "Up Around the Bend"'s party at the end of the highway--are unmistakably situated in the tough-minded context the matter-of-fact protests create. Few rock and rollers have more unreservedly confronted the paradox at the music's heart, which is that the escape it grants its participants must carry within it an awareness of its own limitations if they're not to pay serious consequences later.

Elsewhere there's a Bo Diddley blues and a Roy Orbison whoop-de-doo and a tribute to the King. There's an elegiac closer that signifies the spiritual dimension of home sweet home with a saxophone solo. And there's that final hit, one of the least typical songs Fogerty ever wrote, and in the running for the best. This record has the road all over it, the boys had been touring pretty steady, and "Lookin' Out My Back Door" is the one time Fogerty gets to enjoy the domestic life his modest music always evokes. It's also the one time he sounds like a hippie--it's his dope song. But does he get eight miles high? He most certainly does not. He sits on his porch and watches harmless imaginary creatures cavort. I like to think that 30 years later he's still in good with those creatures, and that they're as every bit as harmless as he thought they were.

--Robert Christgau

April 2000

Longtime Village Voice critic Robert Christgau is the author of Grown Up All Wrong: 75 Great Rock and Pop Artists from Vaudeville to Techno, book-length Consumer Guides to the '70s, '80s, '90s, and the recently reissued Any Old Way You Choose It, which includes his 1970 "Creedence: Where Do You Go from the Top?"

[SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES ON BONUS TRACKS]:

Travelin' Band (Remake) – Recorded December 19, 1969, six weeks after the release of the “Cosmo’s Factory” album, this bare bones version (no horn overdubs) of the Creedence hit may have been recorded as a backing track for television lip-synch appearances.

Up Around the Bend – Recorded live in Amsterdam by the three-piece version of Creedence on the band’s final European tour in 1971 for the “Live In Europe” album, but never before released.

Born On the Bayou – From a summit meeting between Creedence and Booker T. and the MGs, the Memphis soul specialists who were not just Creedence’s supporting act on tour by request, but a key role model to the band musically, filmed for a concert television special at Creedence’s Berkeley headquarters, Cosmo’s Factory, in 1970.

1. **RAMBLE TAMBLE** [7:09]
2. **BEFORE YOU ACCUSE ME** [3:24]
(Ellas "Bo Diddley" McDaniel)
3. **TRAVELIN' BAND** [2:07]
4. **OOBY DOOBY** [2:05]
(Moore/Penner)
5. **LOOKIN' OUT MY BACK DOOR** [2:31]
6. **RUN THROUGH THE JUNGLE** [3:09]
7. **UP AROUND THE BEND** [2:40]
8. **MY BABY LEFT ME** [2:17]
(Crudup)
9. **WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN** [2:28]
10. **I HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE** [11:05]
(Whitfield/Strong)
11. **LONG AS I CAN SEE THE LIGHT** [3:33]

BONUS TRACKS:

12. **TRAVELIN' BAND (REMAKE TAKE)** [2:25]
13. **UP AROUND THE BEND (LIVE IN AMSTERDAM, HOLLAND, 9/10/71)** [2:40]
14. **BORN ON THE BAYOU (W/BOOKER T. @ FANTASY STUDIOS, 1970)** [5:57]

All compositions by J.C. Fogerty except as noted.

[Credits]:

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2. **BEFORE YOU ACCUSE ME** [3:24]
3. **TRAVELIN' BAND** [2:07]
4. **Ooby Dooby** [2:05]
5. **LOOKIN' OUT MY BACK DOOR** [2:31]
6. **RUN THROUGH THE JUNGLE** [3:09]
7. **UP AROUND THE BEND** [2:40]
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13. **UP AROUND THE BEND (LIVE IN AMSTERDAM, HOLLAND, 9/10/71)** [2:40]
14. **BORN ON THE BAYOU (JAM WITH BOOKER T. JONES @ FANTASY STUDIOS, 1970)** [5:57]

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[DISC LABEL] :

ARTIST: CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL

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[track list optional]

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