

SHAD WEATHERSBY

In New Orleans, famous for its Rhythm & Blues and Jazz traditions, Shad Weathersby has stood out as one of the city's top folk and Americana singer-songwriters for the past three decades. His fifth album, *THE BEATEN PATH*, showcases his quirky-but-thought-provoking lyrics and well-crafted timeless acoustic-based music.

Before his solo career, Weathersby was in two folk-pop harmony groups, Huck's River and The Hooligans, and members of those groups continue to play on Shad's recordings. In addition, Shad has performed onstage and in the studio with multi-million-selling-pianist George Winston, who joins with Weathersby again on *THE BEATEN PATH*. Weathersby's recordings can be purchased at his website (www.shadweathersby.com) or at online stores such as www.amazon.com or www.cdbaby.com.

"I was attracted to folk music at an early age because of the lyrical message," Weathersby says. "What a great way to tell stories! Songwriting is a magical mix of words and music, and it's a special gift that I have always admired. As I go through life, I try to open my senses to sights, sounds and feelings. Then comes a period of rumination below the surface, and eventually a song bubbles forth about that experience. The key for me is to let the songs come when they're ready and not spend too much time on the nuts and bolts of the music. I want the music to have an honesty and purity about it instead of being formulated in any way. To me every song I write is like a time capsule capturing a moment in history."

By primarily performing in the area where he lives, Weathersby follows a tradition of other similar singer-songwriters such as Jesse Winchester (Eastern Canada), J.J. Cale (Oklahoma) and Willis Alan Ramsey (Texas), who are better-known nationally for their recordings than their concerts.

"I love New Orleans and I wasn't about to let Hurricane Katrina drive me away," states Weathersby, who also is a woodworking craftsman and runs a furniture refinishing business. "I have been working hard restoring Katrina-damaged furniture, so *THE BEATEN PATH* album served as a personal catharsis and healing process after so much devastation."

Weathersby's music reflects Shad's eclectic tastes and it ranges from progressive-folk to rootsy Americana and on to polished pop-rock. The lyrics cover a broad spectrum of subject matter – "Beaten Path" ("the ancient creator watching the progress of humankind from primitive instinctive animal to wherever we are now"), "Naked Man" ("expressing our vulnerability to newly-emerging Level-Four species-jumping lethal viruses"), "She Is A Song" ("how love can keep you sane against the pressures of the world"), "Mary" ("being in that position of wanting faith and peace, but struggling with religious belief"), "East Meets West" ("a tongue-in-check culture clash"), and a pair of "off-center love songs" ("Tell Me" and "Chuckie Wrote Me a Poem").

Weathersby utilizes southern Louisiana imagery in some of his compositions including "Scatter Our Love" ("a tribute to a French Quarter bar, the owner Benny Barker, and all the friends I hung out with there who scattered when Benny died"), "Orleans Rain" ("my memories of this city and all the storms and hurricanes that have come through here"), "Last Lonely YAT" ("a song for all the displaced people from New Orleans who know a YAT is a local character who uses the colloquial phrase 'Where y'at?'"), "Summer Gecko Night" ("a small boy lies in bed watching lizards on his window while his parents have a party in the other room"), and "Hallows Eve 1903" ("a walk through the French Quarter on Halloween night a hundred years ago").

"But these descriptions are just general guidelines. Mostly I want to stimulate the listener's thought process and then they can bring their own interpretations to the songs. I also wanted the music to be natural, warm and organic. I write the songs on acoustic guitar so that is a big part of the sound."

Listeners will hear some of Weathersby's influences in his music. While growing up in the Crescent City, he absorbed the city's rich musical heritage including the classic rhythm-and-blues of acts like The Neville Brothers and Ernie K-Doe. Shad started singing at a young age and began playing acoustic guitar when he was 14. At first he gravitated toward harmony groups like Peter, Paul & Mary, The Beach Boys and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. Soon Shad came to appreciate singer-songwriters including Bob Dylan, Van Morrison, Paul Simon, Joni Mitchell, James Taylor and Tom Waits. "The rootsy sound of The Band also influenced me quite a bit." As a teenager, Shad sang in rock bands playing the hit songs of the era, "even though my father always wanted me to be a boxer like him."

In college Shad met other musicians with similar interests who hung out together on campus and Weathersby still performs with several of these longtime friends. After college, Weathersby, Frosty Horton and John Meunier formed the group Huck's River, while their friend Sam Broussard founded the band Manchild. Huck's River, an acoustic-oriented harmony group, left New Orleans and traveled first to Colorado and then to California where they were occasionally joined onstage by George Winston.

Winston started his own record company, Dancing Cat Records, and in the Eighties released Shad's first solo album, LIGHT OUTSIDE THAT DOOR, that Winston, Horton, Meunier and Broussard played on (and Horton produced). Shad wrote all of the material except for one penned by Winston. Legendary gospel group The Zion Harmonizers contributed backing vocals on the title track, New Orleans-legend Alvin "Red" Tyler did the horn arrangements, and David Peters from LeRoux was on drums. This CD has been reissued by Rolling Road Music with four bonus tracks by Huck's River.

Back in New Orleans, Weathersby performed regularly as a solo act opening for Ray Charles, Stephen Stills, Three Dog Night, Leon Redbone and David Allen Coe. Shad also has played at three of the prestigious New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festivals. He formed the group The Hooligans (with Meunier) and they performed regionally for several years.

Weathersby's second solo album of original material was DREAMWORLD. Once again, Winston, Horton and Meunier contributed, and Horton produced. "That was a very personal album with a lot of family history in it," Shad remembers. His third CD, TO BEHOLD THE LIGHT, is a collection of original spiritual songs. "I took stories from the Bible and tried to imagine what it would have been like if I was there witnessing those events." Weathersby's fourth CD, CHOMP CHOMP, was original songs geared for children ("fun music mixing humor, fantasy and educational information"). The CD won a Parents Choice Award. Shad regularly performs this material at schools, family fairs and children's expos.

Now with the new album THE BEATEN PATH, Weathersby's old friends return to make appearances. Frosty Horton produced (he has also produced recordings by Professor Longhair, Jenn Adams and Mark Sloniker among others) with Sam Broussard co-producing about half the tunes. Shad wrote all the songs (one with Broussard and one with John Meunier). The musicians include pianist George Winston (who wrote a special intro for "Orleans Rain"); guitarist Broussard (who has played with Linda Ronstadt and Michael Martin Murphey); bassist Byron House (Nickel Creek, Sam Bush); pianist Steve Conn (Bonnie Raitt, Shelby Lynne); bouzouki player Butch Baldassari (Nashville Mandolin Ensemble, Richard Greene); oboist Roger Wiesmeyer (principle oboist for the Nashville Symphony); and drummer Craig Krampf (Warren Zevon, Melissa Etheridge).

"My songs are little stories, small slices of life, things I want to describe and tell people about," explains Weathersby. "My albums are 'life markers,' points of reference along my journey. I write music because that little voice inside tells me I have to do it. I don't have any interest in becoming famous, but I love for people to hear my music and enjoy it."

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