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Kenny Butterill ...No One You Know

By Greg Simpson - Country Music News - Canada

To most, he is unknown - like the name of his debut CD - *No One You Know* (released on No Bull Songs Records). But the word has started to get out that this songwriter/ producer, Kenny Butterill, puts out very cool music. Hard to categorize, Butterill has quietly established himself as a radio friendly tunesmith of integrity with his tasty offerings of bluesy folk alt-country music that always seem to hit the 'sweet spot'. With what some would call a backward approach (others called it worse), and without a lot of hoopla, Butterill's *No One You Know* CD has landed in charts and garnered global airplay on over 120 stations in almost 20 countries. This backward approach included using 'scratch' vocals on the final mastered CD, releasing in Europe first, no touring or showbiz 'thank you', a focus on the internet and sparse advertising. Bemused with that analysis, Butterill commented, "We have just stumbled along with this, we went to where the doors opened, and we're just gratified and humbled with the response".

Like his music, the man himself is hard to categorize. Butterill is an eccentric, reclusive mountain man, currently living comfortably and quietly in the boondocks of the rugged Santa Cruz Mountains of Northern California. On the phone and in person, Butterill is reluctant, shy, and soft-spoken. When pressed about his current day to day life, he says he spends a lot of time these days on the "back porch, on-line" doing work for his (non-music) company while continuing to write, record and work in the studio.

When asked about why his music seems to get airplay in different formats, with most interest coming from outside North America, he sheepishly responds, "My songs usually doesn't match any of the formats out there - even in the States where they have highly specific formats, such as AltCountry/ Americana and Adult Album Alternative (A3) - it's still difficult, because I kinda fit in between those. So sometimes we hear back that it's too country from A3 and that it's not country enough for some country stations. But that's ok - it's just the way it is - I am just fortunate that there is a place for my music in radio out there."

As with any type of art, Butterill is not without critics. I gave Kenny a chance to respond to one reviewer who recently suggested that Butterill was being opportunistic by including his Princess Diana song on the CD. Getting a little agitated, Kenny replied, "The song about Princess Diana was originally recorded around the time of her widely publicized divorce when she was on her own, about a year before she was killed in that crash in Paris. Back then, the press was being vicious towards her - she was being attacked. That's the context of the song. Heck, the copy right was several months before the accident. After her death, the Diana tribute album was being put together and we did pitch the song there. I got a nice note back from Richard Branson's office and got the impression that the tune was too racy for the tribute album. After that, I never pitched the song again, but it was a song I was proud of so I included it on my CD. "

As a Canadian who has lived almost half his life in the States, Butterill has unique perspectives on both the USA and Canada, which are particularly noticeable in his two political tunes on the CD, "Back to Canada", and "Our Liberty". Both toe-tapping tunes do cause one to think a bit about our social circumstances. Kenny reflects on the songs : "Those two tunes say what I want to say on politics and perhaps can serve as a reminder that we all could pay more attention to what's happening".

But mostly this CD is comfortable, feel good, music. One Canadian reviewer even called it "totally mellow makeout music". Another said it is great driving music for the open road and the backroads. Butterill says he has three criteria for his music - "It's gotta be good in the background, there's got to be an interesting story, and there should never be anything too offensive". From the lead off single "How Far Can We Go?", a tune about leaving Canada for the States driving down the eastern seaboard in an old beat up car, to "Balsam Lake", a sentimental mandolin laced beauty about his grandpa's cottage north of Toronto, Butterill's tunes shuffle nicely from one to the next and do stay true to his criteria for his music.

Kenny Butterill is now working on a follow-up album, with tracks being cut in California and Nashville. He's also doing some co-writing. You can find more information about Kenny Butterill and where to buy the CD at <http://www.nobullsongs.com>

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