

Music Review

Title: *Tear Down the Walls*

Artist: Johnny Crescendo

Produced: 2005

Cost: \$18.00 USD

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Reviewer: Steven E. Brown

This is a compilation of earlier releases by British folk rocker, Johnny Crescendo, who now makes his home in Philadelphia. Johnny learned so well from ADAPT, the American street activist, disability rights group, that he helped found DAN (the Disabled People's Direct Action Network) in England, which shut down the national telethon. This mentality is evident throughout Johnny's songs. This CD includes about 80 minutes of songs. It is organized into Anthems; Love Songs; and Folk Blues. While I like all of Johnny's songs, my favorite remains, "The Ballad of Josie Evans," the story of a neglected woman in an institution:

Josie was a wheelchair user
She spent eleven years inside
A short stay institution
Where she was banged up without trial
Eleven years the white coats met
And talked & analysed
Dispensed the drugs politely
Until one day Josie died

The compilation's title song, in keeping with this theme, begins:

This song is for all the people dying in a nursing home
This song is for all the people who are going to die in a nursing home
Tear down the walls
Tear down the walls of a nursing home.

The song continues to discuss the need for people to be able to choose where they live. In a similar vein, the song "Not Dead Yet" addressing physician-assisted suicide, states:

I'm lying at the gates of heaven
I'm not dead yet...

I was kind of amazed to see St. Peter roll up in a wheelchair
I said, "hey Pete, I want to go back."
He said "go and give shit to Dr. Quack."

On a more autobiographical note, "I Love My Body," offers the refrain that it's the only one he's going to get. And in the tender "Jasia's Song" Johnny offers this tribute to his daughter:

My heart is aching for you my little child
For you my little child
My heart aches for you my little child
My little child
Go to sleep now
Shhh
Hold daddy's hand
Go to sleep

If you are not familiar with Johnny's work this is a great place to start. If you know it and do not have this compilation, you may well want to add it to your library.

For the desperate and the damned?
And which people vote?
For injustice in the land?
Is it you or your mother?
Is it you? Is it you?

Josie left a letter
Which I found amongst her things
It said I am and I survive
& my heart still has wings
They can take away my freedom
They can drug me with their lies
But they don't have my permission
& I hang on to my pride

