

Jim Cuddy releases a new solo album – *Skyscraper Soul*

By Sharman Yarnell

“You’re incredibly lucky to nab an interview with him” and “hug him for me” were just a couple of Facebook comments I received when I made it known that I would be interviewing Jim Cuddy. I have interviewed a lot of people over the years, William Shatner, Kevin Kline, and a slew of others. But I have rarely had a reaction like that. A home grown boy, known as a band member of Blue Rodeo, he also runs solo with his own band, The Jim Cuddy Band. He is clearly much loved and revered in the music world.

So when I was paged to the reception area the day of the interview and opened the door, I was expecting someone a little more aware of the impact he has on others in the biz. I found, instead, a tall, lanky, very easy-going fella waiting for me...and I did hug him. He brings that out in women. Jim Cuddy greets everyone as if he has known them for years.

Sitting down behind the microphone, we set to talking about the matter at hand: The release of his latest solo album, *Skyscraper Soul*.

Starting off with the title track, he told me it was somewhat of a love letter to the city he had lived in for so long, married in and brought up his children in - Toronto. He talked about walking around some of the other major cities he’s visited, New York and Montreal, and how much he had derived from them. They have their own soul - and that’s what that song is about. Large cities give as much poetry as the mountains and country side do.

One of the album highlights, *Everyone Watched The Wedding*, the record’s first single, was released mid-August. Cuddy explained that he had seen last years Oscar winner, *The Kings Speech*, and he started making comparisons between Prince William’s situation and that of King George VI. Both in a position that they really didn’t want to be in but biting the bullet and doing the best they could. Stiff upper lip, so to speak. Although not really a Royalist, Cuddy found himself, like the rest of the world, caught up in the royal furor celebrating two people in love and just wanting to be together. “Something about this last wedding got me. When I started reading more about it, I realized that there is something about it that is very inspiring.”

He went into the studio with this on his mind and within an hour *Everyone Watched the Wedding* had taken shape. “The world’s anticipation of the wedding was so uplifting, at a time when there are so many negatives in the world.”

“Uplifting” – that’s the word that describes *Skyscraper Soul*. It doesn’t have as much a country sound as his past albums. The sounds of trumpet and organ are the surprise additions to the music. He told me, “I didn’t want the usual country sound to this album”. And that he has definitely achieved. Some of the music on the album stemmed from his writing for his wife, Rena Polley’s, short film, a dark comedy called, *Four Sisters*. Watching the rushes, he realized she needed music to counter-balance the difficult topic of the film. (Four sisters fighting over a dead mother’s possessions while waiting for a doctor



Jim Cuddy is enjoying another successful solo album

to arrive and pronounce her dead.) The result was *Water’s Running High*. “Girls are in a room, their mother’s just died, and they’re evilly splitting up her stuff, splitting up her pharmaceuticals” In this, he steers from his usual sound to using the trumpet. It was this song that was ‘the template’ for the album. “This is the sound I was looking for”, he told me. And it really runs wild from the usual Cuddy sound.

Not all the tunes were used in the film, but he soon had enough material to start thinking about a third album.

The fans of Blue Rodeo and the Jim Cuddy Band will like the album - a lot. Because there’s one thing he doesn’t stray from and that is sadness, hope and warmth. It’s all there in his music and feeds the soul.

Skyscraper Soul is in stores now and The Jim Cuddy Band will be in Montreal at Place des Arts, Theatre Maisonneuve on February 10, 2012. For tickets please call Place des Arts: 514-842-2112 or online: www.laplacedesarts.com

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