

THE BEST OF JONATHAN RUNDMAN: 20 SONGS FROM THE 20th CENTURY

Most of singer/songwriter Jonathan Rundman's cadre of listeners have been acquired during this new millennium. His 2000 release **Sound Theology** was a staggeringly ambitious 52-song double-CD concept album, and his most recent studio CD **Public Library** was a pop-folk triumph, recorded with legendary Americana band The Silos and released in 2004. These projects generated mountains of national press attention and opened up Rundman's music to legions of new fans. What few people realize, however, is that Rundman's touring and recording history stretches back to the early 1990's and includes four indie albums and a host of unreleased songs. Now in 2007 Salt Lady Records is pleased to reexamine that early era of Rundman's career with **The Best of Jonathan Rundman: 20 Songs From the 20th Century**; a testament to one of America's most overlooked yet persistent independent rock artists.

Immediately following high school graduation in 1989, Jonathan Rundman left his hometown of Ishpeming, MI, in the isolated Upper Peninsula, and hit the road with his guitar. Performing in church basements, coffee shops, and colleges, Rundman began a steadily emerging career as a songwriter/troubadour. Rundman's early songs had a frantic folk-punk quality that caught the attention of lowa-based record label This Here Music which released the debut **28 Days in the Yellow Room** in 1992. Rundman's rollicking acoustic guitar, harmonica, and drum machine arrangements pre-dated Beck's "Loser" by a year, while echoing like-minded '80s bands like Violent Femmes and Timbuk 3.

By 1994, Rundman had relocated to the Pacific Northwest and entered an extraordinarily prolific phase of songwriting. That Fall saw the release of two more Jonathan Rundman albums: a 10-song harmony duet project recorded with cousin Bruce Rundman under the moniker **The Chandlers**, and the solo follow-up to **28 Days...**, a geography themed CD entitled **Wherever**. Jonathan and Bruce played a few shows around the country in support of their Chandlers album, but it was **Wherever** that allowed Rundman to climb to a new level of music industry acceptance. Rundman had taken a big leap forward as both a songwriter and producer, and his increasingly melodic songs generated comparisons to bands like The Jayhawks and Freedy Johnston. A solo acoustic show at Eugene, Oregon's legendary rock venue John Henry's prompted the local paper Eugene Weekly to predict "watch out for this guy," and a music journalist in the audience was impressed enough to give Rundman his first national review: Billboard magazine profiled Rundman's **Wherever**, saying "his lyrics are refreshing and pleasantly unusual...the recording has a homey Liz-Phair-ish quality." Soon Rundman was fielding calls from record labels and radio programmers, and filling his calendar with performances from coast to coast.

Rundman's Midwestern origins drew him back in 1996, when he relocated to Chicago. This new music scene gave Jonathan Rundman his first chance to collaborate with other artists in a supportive community, and those connections manifested themselves in the recording of 1997's **Recital**. With his progressively sophisticated composing and recording skills, Rundman explored new sounds and topics on this 15-song CD. Guest instrumentalists included some of Rundman's musical heroes including guitarist Dag Juhlin of The Slugs and Poi Dog Pondering and drummer Pat Tomek of Kansas City's The Rainmakers. A growing number of national and regional publications commented on Rundman's **Recital**, likening the

heavier guitar sound to Paul Westerberg, and the sonic adventurousness to everyone from Giant Sand to Elvis Costello. The tour in support of this new collection of songs zig-zagged across the Midwest and beyond, and Rundman performed more frequently with a full band. In the Summer of 1999 Rundman returned home from months on the road and re-focused his energy on writing new songs. As the 20th Century came to a close, Jonathan Rundman's new creative efforts would eventually lead to his career-defining double-album **Sound Theology** in the year 2000.

28 Days in the Yellow Room, The Chandlers, Wherever, and Recital provide the songs in this new **Best of** compilation. The original pressings of those albums had all been sold by 2001, and since then have remained out-of-print, occasionally surfacing on eBay or in used CD stores, but generally unavailable to the public. The new release of this **20 Songs From The 20th Century** album will allow Rundman's more recent fans to finally hear the songs that paved the way for **Sound Theology** and **Public Library**.

The recordings within this new compilation are collected from a variety of sources. Some songs like "Front Row at the Fashion Show," "Brad N.," and "Nothing Old, Nothing New" are the same recordings from the original albums, but remixed for optimal audio reproduction. Other songs such as "Meeting Nixon," "Armyman," and "Ask Me In Nebraska" contain the original album tracks, but with edited or updated vocal or instrumental performances. A few songs were completely re-recorded for this **Best of** project, including "The 'Con' Prefix Song," "Read the Signs," and "This July." Finally, this album features numerous exclusive previously-unreleased recordings including "The Sound of the Cicadas," "Continental Divide," and a very rare 1993 version of "These Months With You." Undoubtedly the early songs of Jonathan Rundman have never before sounded so clear, dynamic, and energized!

The design for **The Best of Jonathan Rundman: 20 Songs From the 20th Century** is by noted music industry graphic artist **Jim Ward Morris**, who has created CD packages for Cracker, Jay Farrar, Gillian Welch, and Dwight Yoakam. Liner notes are provided by acclaimed music journalist and producer **Daniel Levitin**, who has written liner notes for Stevie Wonder and Julia Fordham and engineered recordings by Santana and the Grateful Dead.

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SPECIAL NOTE: The initial edition of **The Best of Jonathan Rundman: 20 Songs From the 20th Century** contains a free bonus CD entitled **Myopia: Cassette 4-track Recordings 1991-1998**. Dating back to Jonathan Rundman's teenage years, these 20 songs offer a previously unreleased glimpse into Rundman's most formative recorded work. Primitive demos, songwriting reference tapes, and album pre-production recordings are included along with select 4-track mixes from the original **28 Days...** and **Chandlers** albums.



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