JONATHAN RUNDMAN BIO 2004

Public Library is the long-awaited new album by Minneapolis singer/songwriter Jonathan Rundman, his first collection of previously unreleased material since 2000's *Sound Theology*. The album's thematic centerpiece is the power-pop vocational anthem "Librarian" where Rundman claims the role of musical bibliotechnician, gathering works of fiction, non-fiction, news, and history, and presenting them in rock & roll form for access by the masses. "I bring order out of chaos, I shine light into the dark," Rundman sings, "because power comes from knowledge just like fire from a spark." A grandiose statement about songwriting perhaps, but one Rundman has lived up to. Even Billboard magazine has admitted "Rundman takes lyrical risks that pay off." Rundman's precision with melody and wordplay has been the foundation of his music throughout his career. *Public Library* continues with more of the same, although with a richer sonic backdrop thanks to producer **Walter Salas-Humara** of the New York City band **The Silos**.

Rundman addresses some familiar themes with *Public Library* but tackles formerly untapped topics as well. The album opens with "Smart Girls," Rundman's most radio-worthy recording yet, where he raves about the female intellect over huge guitars and grooving drums. Functional romantic relationships are celebrated in the rollicking "747s" and "Falling Down" with its double-rhyme-scheme structure. Ecclesiastical architecture is the unlikely focus of the observational rocker "Narthex." The geography of the American Midwest has been a recurring theme throughout Rundman's repertoire, and he revisits it here in the ominous "Almost Never See" and in "Park River Bridge," a reflection on the myth of youthful invulnerability.

Political and social issues are also explored throughout the album. "The Serious Kind" has folk-classic potential, and it sums up the troubling realities of the post-9/11 world with simple elegance. Rundman sings "Second Language" from the perspective of a teenage immigrant girl over the pulsing of a string quartet arranged and conducted by Mary Rowell, rock violinist and concertmaster for the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra. In "Cuban Missile Crisis" Rundman uses the precarious Cold War conflict as the setting for a love story with eerie parallels to contemporary global events. The album closes with an exhilarating acoustic jam session "Every Town's the Same" where Rundman details his past few years as a folk-rock troubadour facing the cultural phenomenon sociologists call "placelessness" and the "franchising of America," all while referencing his own results from the Myers-Briggs psychological inventory test. Certainly not the topics of your average rock band!

Jonathan Rundman first surfaced on the national music scene in the late '90s as a Chicago-based touring artist. Traveling in support of his self-released albums *Wherever* and *Recital*, Rundman's melodic and quirky acoustic-rock garnered steadily growing support from audiences, journalists, and radio programmers in the Americana, power-pop, and folk communities. (This period of time would eventually be represented on CD with the live compilation *Field Recordings: Lo-Fi and LIVE in the Midwest*.)

In 2000, the then-29-year-old Rundman took a major commercial and creative risk with his most ambitious recording, the 52-song double-CD concept album *Sound Theology*. Reflecting upon his Finnish-Lutheran heritage and upbringing in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, *Sound Theology*'s unusual subject matter and eclectic stylistic palette gave Rundman's career even greater momentum. The album featured over two hours of intricate pop compositions, acoustic hymn interpretations, and raw garage rock, with Rundman playing most of the instruments himself. The press received *Sound Theology* with surprising enthusiasm and likened Rundman to musical adventurers such as Beck, Bruce Cockburn, Elvis Costello, and Liz Phair.

With the release of *Sound Theology,* Jonathan Rundman began what would be three years of relentless touring. Rundman hit the road alone with an acoustic guitar and played 150 dates a year from Florida to Alaska, New York to L.A., and in Canada, Sweden, and Finland. He found receptive audiences at colleges, rock clubs, coffeehouses, theaters, and church basements, and warmed up the stage for a wide variety of headliners including like-minded roots rockers Vigilantes of Love, pop genius Aimee Mann, and South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Now in 2004 Jonathan Rundman has entered a significantly different phase of life and career. After relocating to Minneapolis, Rundman stopped performing and began working on what would become his most concise and accomplished work to date, *Public Library*. Enlisting Americana legends The Silos as his backing band and Silos leader Walter Salas-Humara as his producer, Rundman traveled from the Midwest to New York City and back to assemble 11 new tracks. Using an outside producer for the first time, Rundman turned over the reigns to Salas-Humara who expertly provided the songs with a pristine yet rocking audio framework. Guest musicians on the album are some of the finest of New York's indie-rock community including vocalist Mary Lee Kortes (Mary Lee's Corvette, Freedy Johnston), violinist Mary Rowell (Sheryl Crow, Joe Jackson), lead guitarist Jason Victor (Steve Wynn, Mary McBride), bassist Drew Glackin (Crash Test Dummies, Graham Parker), and drummer Konrad Meissner (Mary Lou Lord, Syd Straw). As the *Public Library* album was being mixed and mastered in New York, Jonathan Rundman was in Minnesota witnessing the birth of his first child, a son. The album is scheduled for release in the Fall of 2004.