

Press Release for

## SONGS - Gerry Hemingway

Released winter of 2002 on **Between the Lines** (Frankfurt, Germany)



### Distribution:

**Forced Exposure**, [www.forcedexposure.com](http://www.forcedexposure.com), +1-617-629-4774 (Wholesale/Retail)

**North Country Distributors**, +1-315-287-2852, [www.cadencebuilding.com](http://www.cadencebuilding.com) (Wholesale/Retail)

**From Gerry Hemingway's Web site**, [www.gerryhemingway.com](http://www.gerryhemingway.com) (Retail only)

### Musical Category:

Hybrid of Pop, R & B, Jazz, Folk, Art Rock, Electronic, Improvised Music  
(in keeping with the label that calls itself "Between the Lines")

### Short Description:

Twelve engaging and compelling Songs from the unpredictable, highly original composer/percussionist Gerry Hemingway. Featuring the soulful and evocative vocals of Lisa Sokolov, these songs combine themes ranging from the lessons of history to the challenges of adulthood with sonically lush danceable grooves.

**Contact for additional information:** Gerry Hemingway, email: [gerryhem@mindspring.com](mailto:gerryhem@mindspring.com), +1-609-716-8203

"A rich atmospheric disc, with an intelligent approach to the shape, exuberant in the interplay and splendidly played. \*\*\*\*\* (Highest Rating)" Paolo Carlubbi - All About Jazz (Italy)  
Voted #1 Jazz Album of 2002 by MUSIC MAGAZINE (from Japan) circ.apprx. 150,000) - Mark Rappoport/Shiro Matsuo

### Background - Gerry Hemingway



For those of you unfamiliar with my work here is a very short bio, I encourage you to visit the web site for a more thorough overview - [www.gerryhemingway.com](http://www.gerryhemingway.com)

I've been making a living as a composer and performer solo and ensemble music since 1974. I have led numerous groups, most recently a quartet with Ellery Eskelin, Ray Anderson and Mark Dresser as well as collaborative groups with Mark Helias & Ray Anderson (BassDrumBone), Reggie Workman & Miya Masaoka (Brew), Georg Graewe & Ernst Reijseger (GRH trio), Marilyn Crispell & Barry Guy (CGH trio), duo w/Thomas Lehn, duo w/John Butcher and many others. I am a recent Guggenheim fellow and have received numerous commissions for chamber and orchestral work including "Terrains", a concerto for percussionist and orchestra commissioned by the Kansas City Symphony.

Those of you familiar with my work will understand that this release is a significant departure from everything else I've done as a composer. Yet there is a continuum marked by the presence of a number of musicians (Wolter Wierbos, Ellery Eskelin, Herb Robertson, James Emery in particular) with whom I have had ongoing associations for many years.

*Why did you choose to write songs after thirty years of composing and performing instrumental music?*

"It started with the desire to create something specifically for my wife and simultaneously challenge myself to create a recording that would rival the popularity of what gets listened to the most in our household."

### International Artists featured on this recording...



Lisa Sokolov-voice (US)  
James Emery-guitars (US)  
Kermit Driscoll-ac/el bass (US)  
Gerry Hemingway-drums, sampler, voice  
John Butcher-tenor sax (UK)  
Ellery Eskelin-tenor sax (US)  
Thomas Lehn-analogue synthesizer (DE)  
Herb Robertson-trumpets (US)  
Wolter Wierbos-trombone (NL)

Larry Svirchev posed some questions (which I've paraphrased here) that will give you some more background on this project.

*What compelled you to undertake the "Songs" project?*

"Many threads came together. One of those threads took root in acknowledging my origins as a musician. The rock/folk and blues milieu that I grew up experiencing has always been a piece of who I am as a composer and drummer. Over time, as I matured as a listener and composer, my appreciation for singers developed with a particular penchant for all forms of "rural" American music

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"and popular African music. Songs of every conceivable variety have remained an inspiration to my efforts as a composer. The offer from Between the Lines to do a cd that was not locked into a categorical straightjacket arrived at a time and place in life where writing some songs seemed like the next logical step to take. I felt ready to cross a boundary of solely composing and performing instrumental music."

This coincided with a need to express ideas and feelings in a more direct medium than instrumental music. I wanted to make a recording that was especially for my wife for very personal reasons. I also wanted to create a cd that would rival the popularity of the recordings that get listened to the most in our household. We share the enjoyment of an eclectic mix of gospel, pop, country, afro-pop, blues, jazz, lieder, afro-cuban, folk and bluegrass singers and songwriters and I was curious to see how I'd fare in such fast company."

*When it came to creating lyric, what choices did you make regarding content?*

"Some of the lyric is personal, some are more universal, some such as "Emperor" and "Anton" are set in historical frames. There is a diversity of lyrical content on this recording and some of it is coming directly out of my life experience. When I started writing these songs I had a hit a bottom where I really had no choice but to confront some of the core issues of my life, a painful but worthwhile lifelong process and I know there are many who can relate to this journey. I also began to delve more deeply into what life was offering as lessons and writing these songs was a way to reflect on and process some of these experiences.

The recording is dedicated to my wife Nancy, and indeed some of the lyric grew directly out of our ongoing dialogue and relationship. Her multi layered way of viewing things help stimulate my writing process. Sometimes a phrase, or a succinct metaphor would become the kernel for me to expand into a full song. Take for instance the piece "Time to Go". In general it's about being able to distinguish between being adored for what you do; the image of who you are as a performer and being your true self in an intimate relationship. There can be a tendency to favor work and fantasy over true intimacy.

Other pieces emerged in a sometimes strange unconscious way often while travelling. In writing "Rain" for instance, I was on tour in one of those states you experience after 8-9 hours of continuous train travel, and a collection of feelings and images emerged that vividly captured the turmoil I was experiencing inside myself. The sonic and visual imagery that surrounded me as I wrote the song melded into the lyric, lending a sense of place which I think gives this song (and some of the other ones too) another layer in which the listener can find relation."

*How did you come to choose the musicians for this project?*

"I consider myself very fortunate to have come in contact with the many remarkable musicians who have contributed such wonderful performances to this recording. Lisa Sokolov, whom I began working with a few years ago, in the context of her trio and quartet, seemed to understand without any hesitation, the process I was using for shaping these songs. I mostly sang the song for her and did my best to convey, within the limits of my vocal ability, the melodic shape, phrasing, dynamic flow and emotional intent. She took the ball and ran with it, bringing the songs to life. I feel this project brought out a side of her vocal abilities that is different in emphasis from her own work.

Herb & Ellery are ongoing members of my working quartet and their presence offers both continuity with my previous work and brings forward their remarkable talents in a new context. One need only give "Out of the Trees" a good listen to experience one of Ellery's remarkable linear solos developing a highly interactive relationship to the lyric and vocal. Similarly, Wolter Wierbos, who has performed in my quintet for over thirteen years turned in some incredible work, his solo and obligato work on "Time to Go" is masterful by any standard.

John Butcher, with whom I have been touring in duo in the US finds himself in a setting for which some might assume he has little relation. But there is no more perfect a musician for the pieces he is featured on. This is in particular evidence in his obligato and harmonic navigation of the thorny, "Anton" whose harmonic rhythmic content is sampled from Webern's "Five Pieces for Orchestra" (the piece has as its setting the tragic death of Webern by a frightened US soldier after WW2 had officially ended)."

*What did you do differently in the process of recording and producing this project?*

"Because of the limited budget I could not record the project in a manner in which I have done all my other work, which is normally with all the musicians rehearsing and recording the material together. Working individually made increasing sense to me as I developed the material, and recording one musician at a time is often the method used for pop productions, whose standards of production I was striving to achieve. This logistically allowed me to incorporate more musicians than I might have otherwise, by recording material when and wherever I met up with Wolter Wierbos, Thomas Lehn, and John Butcher. The rest of the material was recorded round the corner from where I live directly into my computer in a very small studio. I enjoyed this method of working very much. As I worked with each musician we had the opportunity to delve more deeply than usual into the material we were working on in a relaxed and unpressured way, which is not the case when the meter is ticking at a full fledged state of the art studio. This was particularly the case with James Emery and Kermit Driscoll whose parts had the opportunity to evolve additional layers as we listened back and reviewed the material.

As a composer I loved the opportunity to manipulate and sculpt every detail of the audio through the time intensive post production process of editing and mixing. I have never spent more time on any single project, in this case the better part of two years."

This information plus hyperlinks to bios and additional info is available at  
[www.gerryhemingway.com](http://www.gerryhemingway.com) (click on Songs)