

Tom Guard's *Shy River* Runs Deep

Singer/songwriter Tom Guard is such an original new voice in the music world, I almost hate to start my review of his *Shy River* CD with a comparison to his late legendary father Dave Guard, who founded the Kingston Trio more than 50 years ago with Bob Shane and Nick Reynolds.

First, Tom Guard's voice sounds a lot like Dave's, especially on those rumbling low notes. That's a nice bonus for Kingston Trio fans. To say his album is eclectic is putting it mildly. Like Dave, Tom loves to draw musical inspiration from any source he damn well pleases -- rock, country, folk, blues, jazz. However, the resulting melodies and harmonies are very much his own, unique and always memorable. You find yourself humming them for days. His lyrics, whether serious or playful, are intelligent and honest. *Shy River* runs deep.

Tom co-produced *Shy River* with his great drummer Peter Rubbo. He even designed the album art himself. His mother Gretchen Guard is a well-known Santa Fe artist and he inherited talents from her as well.

He also plays many musical instruments on *Shy River*, including keyboards, bass, banjo and the priceless Martin acoustic guitar given to him by Bob Shane, now the only living original Kingston Trio member. Martin Guitar reproduced Dave Guard's favorite acoustic guitar to commemorate the golden anniversary of the group's founding.

Some say the much-undervalued Kingston Trio changed the course of music history. Three clean-cut, handsome and witty college boys helped start the folk music revolution in America – and helped other countries rediscover their own traditional music. Guard and Shane especially loved the harmonious music from their Hawaiian homeland and Nick's father was a Navy man who traveled the world collecting songs along the way.

The Kingston Trio didn't care if their music came from America's Appalachian Mountains (*Tom Dooley*), Europe, the Caribbean, Mexico or Africa. They influenced many future folk and rock stars. In 1959, four Kingston Trio albums were on the Top 10 chart. Only the Beatles, big Kingston Trio fans themselves, ever equalled that.

Tom Guard lists his father as a major inspiration too. Among my favorite songs on the *Shy River* CD are the songs Tom wrote to Dave – *Aloha Mr. Guard* and *The Oasis*.

Peace is the theme of *Aloha Mr. Guard*. The music rolls over you like quiet waves on a shore. Dave's grandchildren, Tom's son Pascal and daughter Tara, provide vocal backup for their father, all accompanied by that great acoustic Martin guitar.

For those who weren't born yet, when Dave Guard and Bob Shane argued over the direction the Kingston Trio's music would take, Guard left the most popular singing group in America and moved his family to a secluded beach in Australia. It was almost as

big and sad a break-up as the Beatles'. So it was good for fans who loved them both to know Bob Shane made peace with Dave Guard at the end – water under the bridge.

“They were at peace long ago,” said Tom. “Obviously, Dad just adored Bob.”

Shane gave his old friend’s son a very symbolic gift to carry on with the music.

The lyrics of *Aloha Mr. Guard* are a fond farewell from a son to a father, but also speak for all of Guard’s fans who hated losing him too soon. Aloha means both hello and goodbye in Hawaii, so Tom Guard hints at hopes this isn’t really goodbye.

I forget the lonely place I've been
when I think of the "Joyful" king
I remember you now
and all the songs you would sing
and the possibility
forever rings

Tom spells out his hopes more clearly in the following song, *The Oasis*.

Heaven is a place
where we all meet again
like an oasis where our worries fade away
The love flows in
like coffee in the morning
and the cool breeze leaves our minds at ease

Tom also mentions in the song his sister Sally, who died of lymphatic cancer at age 38 in 2001. John Stewart, who replaced Guard in the Kingston Trio, and Nick Reynolds both died in 2008. That will be quite a joyful reunion in they sky. Tom also uses the Martin guitar on his happy tribute to his beloved grandmother, *Mama-San*. Dave Guard’s mother Marjorie, who lived most of her long life in Hawaii, died in 2007.

Mama-San
Thank You for all that you've done
Being there
the warmth and the light of the sun

Except for *Above and Beyond*, a hard-driving country ballad written by Dave Guard, and Pink Floyd’s beautiful *See Emily Play*, Tom Guard wrote the rest of the songs himself -- some to his children and *Shy River* to his wife:

Get up and dance tonight
lose your fear and feel all right
No one can criticize
the love on which we base our lives

The title track is not just a very personal love song, it offers good life advice for us all.

See www.tomguard.com/shyriver and for details and www.myspace.com/shyriver for song samples.