

Beachers relate lessons learned about life

The press kit – or “propaganda,” as Steve calls it – says that Steve Goldberger had a small epiphany back in 1988 when he submitted to – and survived – open-heart surgery. It was one of those life-affirming occasions when you realize that you should do more of the things you love. Thankfully for us in Steve’s case, that included playing music and writing songs.

Gumbo Dreams is the latest release from Goldberger and his band The Fringe Locals. It is a collection of mostly original tunes (previous CDs included a live recording – some of it from a performance at The Feathers) written in the various country/folk/rock styles that Goldberger has mastered over the 30 years he’s been making music. The lyrical message – if it can be said to have one – is one of optimism befitting a man who has had a brush with death and been given a second chance. Take for example the opening track, *In a Life*: “In a life we have a power to heal and help our fellow man/But we sit around cryin’ why me/When we could be out there lending a hand/And doin’ the best that we can.” Or *Back On My Feet*, “My trust has been broken/My heart lay wide open/Though I’m always landin’ back on my feet.”

But before you start to think this is some new-age, up-with-life stuff, listen to *Paying the Price*, a country/folk rocker in which he sings, “I’m running blind and now I’m wishing/The road I’m on leads back to you.” But it does-

n’t, and now he realizes that he’s “paying the price.” Or just sit back and reminisce with Goldberger on *Play Something Good* when he admonishes some fictitious bar band to play something he can dance to. He then lists some of his favourites: Chuck Berry, Van Morrison, Bob Seeger. (Interestingly Goldberger wrote the song in more of a funk style than the rock ‘n roll he’s asking for.)

Speaking of influences, one can’t help but notice the similarity – both in terms of vocal style, and lyric phrasing – between Goldberger and Jackson Browne. Take particular note of the tune *Back on my Feet* and you’ll see what I mean.

A couple of gems on this CD are the title track, *Gumbo Dreams*, which is a great song about the sights, smells and sounds of New Orleans. He dreams about the **Street Car Named Desire** characters, and although not in a Cajun style, he slips into it during the break, complete with accordion. And a little bonus track at the end called *Messin’ With My Bass*, a little African-pop-style bass duet; think *Call Me Al* from Paul Simon.

Members of the Fringe Locals include Eric Mahar, guitar, vocals and shared songwriting credits on many tunes, Penner MacKay and David Norris on drums and percussion; Herb Nelson, keyboards.

Steve and the Locals will be making one of their regular stops at The Feathers, 962 Kingston Rd, (416-694-0443)

By Bill MacLean

on Jan. 25, so this might be an excellent opportunity to catch these guys live, and grab a copy of the latest CD at the same time.

