

## david bradstreet dreaming in colour

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by David Farrell  
TORONTO

**D**AVID BRADSTREET is walking around with a newfound cheerfulness these days. DREAMING IN COLOR, his second A&M album, has just been released and he has that special kind of serenity that comes with fulfilling a part of a dream. Mentally scanning back across his career, from the grassroots hinterlands to today and DREAMING IN COLOR, one can't help but understand that what this album is all about is the emancipation of a folkie. A coming of age, if you will, for one DAVID BRADSTREET.

**"I**'VE always appreciated literacy and enjoyed playing with melody," he offered, as explanation for what initially enticed him to pursue a singer-songwriter career. Indeed, the troubadour days of the Sixties have put him in good standing with fans over the years. Countless music critics across Canada have sung praise to his well-crafted lyrics and expressive voice, largely based on personal concert appearances and in folk clubs across the land.

The first album, simply titled DAVID BRADSTREET, captured the naturalness of these qualities, the tenor of his voice never over-stating, never under-stating his lyrical content.

And yet, this first album also managed to ever-so-subtly foreshadow its successor, with its intricate, tightly compressed arrangements fused to the songs.

"That first album was magical," he says in retrospect, "what I wanted to do was record an album that could show where I came from, which is why I included songs as old as *Beresford Street* on it."

The repressed energy of that first collection of DAVID BRADSTREET's "best of the past" unleashes itself on this second album with dazzling results. Again, DAVID BRADSTREET addresses his audience with a selection of still-life scenes that make up everyone's



day-to-day life, but the downright frustration that has darkened his work in the past is suddenly vented on this album. The band members fortunately sense this and have asserted themselves with equal clout.

The title track opens with that folk-rock sound so popular today, winds up slowly until, in the final stanza it comes to a boil and the ribbon holding the past is literally ripped away forever. It is the impassioned undoing of a singer-songwriter suddenly finding himself relaxed with a band of musicians of his own kind!

Don't get me wrong, DREAMING IN COLOR may not become another FRAMPTON COMES ALIVE!, but it is an important album for it is a departure for Bradstreet in much the same way as HIGHWAY 61 REVISITED was for Dylan. This album has an intense sense of urgency about it, that wells up from a long, hard past.

**A** TRANSPLANTED LIMEY, Bradstreet arrived in Canada in 1956, just turning 10 years old. He admits that playing for other people has been a life-long concern with him. "I've always performed for anyone who would listen," he says. It goes back to his childhood days in London, and his first instrument, the ukelele. At 13, he had picked up the banjo and at 18, he went to a pawnbroker and purchased his first acoustic guitar for 25 dollars. Early performances for him were mostly confined to the family living room, where father and son would knock off some tunes together. The relationship between the two is as strong today, perhaps even stronger, for there is a great will to succeed in Bradstreet that comes from watching his father move from a minor occupation to the presidency of Random House in Canada. However, acquiring that first guitar was the beginning of an end which DAVID BRADSTREET has yet to fully grip. At first, the guitar took him down into the coffeehouses of Yorkville, at a time when, unlike today, it was inhabited by the rich in spirit. There was also a stint at Ryerson, studying architecture, a part of him that is still alive as attested by the model "dream" house on display at his small, comfy Toronto flat.

Few have chronicled those vintage years for folksingers in Canada in the Sixties. MACLEAN'S wrote the odd chapter in praise of some upstart figure on the scene and various regional journalists penned a few scatterings of thought on the subject. Looking back, it is only the songs of the era that give us any real indication of the awakening process at work.

Back then, it was a dimly lit world inhabited by artisan and artiste, the helpless and the dream weaver: among its ranks were DENNIS LEE, DAVID DEPOE, BRUCE COCKBURN, LENNY BREAU (whose licks could hang suspended in clear air over his audience for minutes!) and the darkly-clad MOSES — the genius, the biker, the archaeological buff.

It was a scene rich in life, in its wisdom and its music.

**T**HE NEXT turning point for DAVID BRADSTREET came by a chance meeting with Woodstock-based LAZARUS, playing at Smale's Pace, in London, Ontario. David joined up with the band, along with CARL KEESEE, who remains with him today, on bass. Working as a quartet, along with BILL HUGHES and drummer LEE SHIVELY, LAZARUS turned from the soft, melodic structure of folk to a brighter, sweeter electric sound that quickly made a name for itself via a hard-nosed tour with TODD RUNDGREN. It was not meant to last, however.

"It was a great experience but the elements necessary to complete the project didn't fall into place," says Bradstreet, of those days. One of the downfalls included being managed, in name, by ALBERT GROSSMAN, who, as David recalls, "was lamenting the death of Janis (Joplin) and wasn't really into us."

It is the mixture of all this past that emerges on DREAMING IN COLOR. The voyeurism of looking from the outside, in at the rock world, is finely put in the track *Keep Our Luck Alive*, and the sense of histrionics in *Last Catch*, a promising opener to side two. It all stacks up to make one of the most potent breakaway albums in some time, with the mark of quality and sureness to give it body, much like a vintage wine.