

CD Review: *Seals and Crofts Live at WBAI's Free Music Store 11/14/71*

TRACK LISTING: 1. Freaks Fret / Irish Linen; 2. Earth; 3. Hog Calling Music; 4. Throat singing / Tin Town; 5. Birthday of My Thoughts; 6. Cottonmouth; 7. Ridin' Thumb; 8. Wisdom; 9. Springfield Mill; 10. High On A Mountain; 11. Year of Sunday; 12. Fiddle Music; 13. Fiddle Music

Seals and Crofts aren't your typical pop stars. For one thing, though they are pegged as folk-rock or soft-rock, they often played a wide variety of musical styles; for another they are members of the Bahai faith, an inclusive, peaceful religion, whose message often entered into their songs. My older brother took me to see them in 1971 at Philharmonic Hall in New York City and I thought they were fabulous. Even before their first hit album, *Summer Breeze*, Seals & Crofts had a busy touring schedule which only got busier as their careers took off. Looking back in an interview decades later, they remarked that they were so busy touring and recording that they never had time to sit down and listen to their concert tapes to properly put together a live album. Two days after attending the Philharmonic Hall concert, I listened to a live radio broadcast of Seals & Crofts performing for an intimate crowd at WBAI, a Pacifica radio station in New York. This concert featured a smaller group than the one I saw at Philharmonic Hall, just Jimmy Seals on guitar, fiddle and alto sax, Dash Crofts on acoustic & electric mandolin and electric piano, and Bobby Leitig on bass and flute. I filed the WBAI broadcast somewhere in the back of my consciousness. Fast forward to 2008, when I wondered what became of that live concert broadcast and went online to look for it in the Pacifica Radio Archives. I didn't think I would find it since there's no mention of it on various Seals & Crofts websites nor did a Google search turn up anything. But there it was, listed in the Pacifica Archives. I contacted the Pacifica Archives and was told that although they needed to make a submaster from the seven inch reel-to-reel tape, that yes it was available. No one had ever ordered it before. This live Seals & Crofts recording had been sitting on the shelf, unheard for 37 years.

Seals and Crofts Live at WBAI's Free Music Store 11/14/71 is a 76 minute cd of the duo just as their third album, *Year of Sunday*, was hitting the stores. The disc is a fine reminder of both their consummate musicianship, and just how impossible it is to label Seals and Crofts. During the hour and a quarter performance, they cross musical genres between folk melodies, down-home country fiddle tunes, bluesy jazz, and funky rock. Jim Seals switches from guitar to fiddle, to alto sax, to Tuva throat singing and back again. Dash Crofts plays bluegrass mandolin passages, middle eastern melodic runs, floating or funky electric piano, then plugs in and wails on electric mandolin. What musical planet did these guys come from anyway? Displaying perfect pitch, their vocal harmonies are just as fine live as in the studio. The song list is largely taken from their first three albums -- *Seals & Crofts*, *Down Home*, and *Year of Sunday*.

The sound on the recording is quite good, with only one momentary dropout occurring during an audience applause between two songs. Although not available for commercial distribution, individuals can order a cd of the concert by contacting the Pacifica Radio Archives, 3129 Cahuenga Boulevard, North Hollywood, California 91604. Phone: 1-800-735-0230 extension 261 . Request Archive Number BC0709.05 (Free Music Store - No. 5 - Seals & Crofts).

- Steve Donoso