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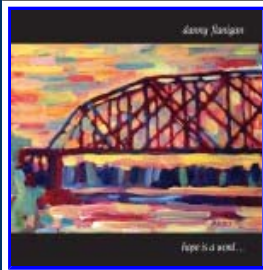
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Personal Reflections
Hope is a Word ,,, (Independent)
danny flanagan

By Kevin Gibson

It's almost difficult to believe the danny flanagan Louisville knows now is the one I saw for the first time in the late 1980s, leaping around the stage like a Mohawk-wearing frog on fire. Flanagan's latest solo effort, some 25 years later, exhibits a songwriter who is indeed years away from flanagan's days as a member of Hopscotch Army.

But people - and thus songwriters - change and grow. So when you spin flanagan's *Hope is a Word*, don't be surprised when a gentle breeze of a ballad about a man missing his son eases its way out of your speakers.

"Gone Crazy Again" gives us a bluegrass-infused glimpse of the old flanagan energy on, but by and large, this is a collection of personal reflections that are probably more suited to drinking a coffee and watching the sun rise than to slam dancing in a smoky club.

You've got the soulful "Loving is Letting People Be" which leads into the title track, a steel guitar-filled, mid-tempo not-quite-country tune that is one of the stronger, more accessible songs on this 12-song disc.

Flanagan deftly balances the sentimental material here with the spooky "Brick Up the World," which is about a house that is falling apart. The song could serve as a metaphor for the gradual decay of society, a relationship, or just about anything that might touch the listener in a personal way.

The album features nibbles of flanagan's familiarity with his hometown of Louisville and its surrounding areas, such as in the spoken-word and hauntingly beautiful "Here She Comes," which is delivered as a conversation with the narrator's friend, Crash.

What it boils down to is that flanagan is a skilled songwriter whose musical voice continues to evolve and grow with him. There isn't a single dud in this collection, truth be told; every song on *Hope is a Word* only serves to strengthen flanagan's growing catalog.

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