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John Flynn
Two Wolves
By Ray Ellis

Two Wolves, at least on first listen, is an album laced with an almost child-like sense of innocence in its social commentary. This should come as no surprise, considering John Flynn is perhaps best known for his *Love Takes a Whole Box of Crayons* and his award-winning work in children's music. In spite of that, or more likely, because of that, *Two Wolves* is at its heart a work about family and its relation to a world numbed by violence and inequity.

Like the great folk singers before him, Flynn lures the listener into his world with an easygoing acoustic sound that belies the message of his lyrics. On "Dover," for instance, the music soars with a patriotic swirl while the lyrics personalize the sacrifice of soldiers who do not come home alive and the loved ones they leave behind. "Blink" takes a different tack in its Don McLean-esque structure and its sentimental look at enduring love. The album's title track could almost work on one of Flynn's children's albums as a simple parable about the choices we make in life and how they shape us.

None of that is meant to imply that the music on *Two Wolves* is maudlin but harmless — far from it. Folk music has always been quietly dangerous — from Woody Guthrie to Bob Dylan to Phil Ochs — and John Flynn's musings are no exception. Never politically overt, Flynn's lyrics nonetheless reflect the angst that is inherent in our collective mindset while maintaining a cautious optimism for the future. "There's No Them There" recognizes divisiveness ("races, creed and nations/are false separations") while steadfastly clinging to unity ("The colors of the rainbow/blend together and show/how we can blend also.") Likewise, "My Father's Chapel" celebrates the commonalities of the world's religions rather than dwell on their differences.

Nor is Flynn afraid to tackle issues head-on. Throughout the course of *Two Wolves*, Flynn speaks with directness and eloquence, as witnessed by "Put Your Freedom Where Your Mouth Is." He reminds us in no uncertain terms that flexing our military might across the globe entails a responsibility to equally flex our social responsibility here as well as abroad. ("Put your freedom where your mouth is/In a land of liberty/He's for freedom and he'll shout his/cause no silenced man is free.")

Two Wolves is unlikely to be a chart-topper, and John Flynn probably won't be on VH1 or CMT anytime soon. That's unimportant. What is important is *Two*

Wo/ves keeps the spirit of folk roots activism alive in a society sledgehammered by soundbites. This is an album that not only pays homage to the protest song but quietly reinvents it as well. And John Flynn is a musician who is, as this album attests, constantly reinventing himself.