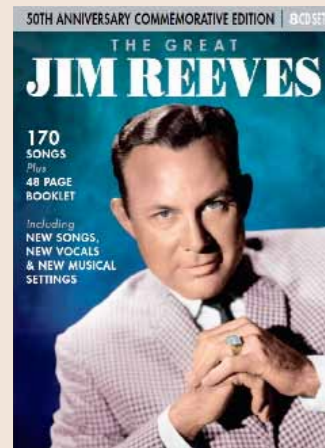


**JIM REEVES**  
**The Great Jim Reeves**  
 ★★★★★



8 CDs: 170 songs  
 CD1 – *Early Days* / CD2 – *Rarities & Alternate Vocals* /  
 CD3 – *Gospel* / CD4 – *Narratives & Folk* / CD5 – *The Nashville Sound* / CD6 – *Pop Stylings* /  
 CD7 – *New Songs & Christmas* /  
 CD8 – *In Concert & Interview*  
 Overdub production: Larry Jordan  
**H&H Music**  
 7:39:25

To commemorate the 50th anniversary year of Jim's passing H&H Music have released this bumper set of Reeves recordings which includes 170 songs, of which 92 are overdubs where Reeves' voice has been isolated from the original backings, re-mastered, and then given new backing tracks. The man in charge of this project is none other than Larry Jordan, who seems to be on a personal mission to honour Reeves like no other has done before. It was Jordan who authored the controversial book on Reeves a couple of years ago, and was also recently responsible for the Patsy Cline tracks which had a similar treatment.

"Even if you have bought every VoiceMasters and/or H&H release before, this set

still offers 42 NEW overdubs of RCA masters you have never heard before," says Jordan who has also written almost 18,000 words for the accompanying booklet with his daughter, Sara Jordan, who also helped with sequencing of the tracks and added what her dad calls "a youthful perspective." It includes notes on each song and some rare photos.

"It truly was a 'labour of love' says Jordan. "I did 42 of these overdubs in the months following a heart ablation, and I think they were actually recuperative for me and aided my recovery! That's because I have so much fun working with talented musicians, orchestrators and background singers. Over the years I have assembled quite a team and a real synergism has developed amongst all of us; there are absolutely no egos involved. Everybody comes to the project with a spirit of cooperation and creative energy, striving to make these songs sound as good as possible."

Some people are of the opinion that adding new music to old vocals is an act of heresy. I'm not one of them. It's not as though Jim Reeves can go into the studio any more, and for such an immense vocalist it's not only interesting to hear these songs updated, but is like getting new old records, and for a true music fan there is little better than that. It's almost as good as discovering a singer that you love that you've never heard of before.

"What we are doing is tantamount to changing the frame around a great painting that has suffered the ravages of time," is Jordan's perspective. "A lot of Jim's recordings have experienced audio degradation over the years and we have painstakingly restored them so his voice has better

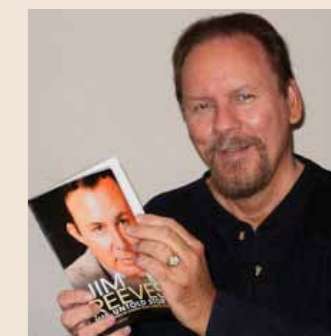
clarity and richness than ever before. And then we've changed the frame - musically - so it's as if we are now showcasing a great painting so you see it to best advantage. Incidentally, bringing Jim's sound up to date is the ONLY way to get him played on radio and it is my mission to expose his incredible talent to new audiences. The so-called purists who insist they only like his original music can still listen to him that way; we haven't taken their music away from them!"

Whilst I personally think that Reeves has one of the best voices of all time, and was raised around a lot of his records (my mother was a huge fan) my own familiarity with his work is really only sufficient to spot the new overdubs on the better-known tracks such as the *Nashville Sound* and *Pop Stylings* CDs, and there is now doubting that it all sounds fresh. As David Allan mentions in his column this month, the version here of *I Fall To Pieces* is stunning, and undeniably enhanced by the female vocals of Kenzie Wetz (who also plays fiddle on the Grand Ole Opry). She also provides duet vocals to a nice late night, almost jazzy arrangement on *Have You Ever Been Lonely*. Possibly my favourite arrangement though was on *Adios Amigo*

which features Steve Patrick (who played trumpet for Aretha Franklin) giving it an up-to-date South of the border feel.

Amongst the enormous team of musicians who contributed to the project, and who Jordan says "are proud to play on tracks by the great Jim Reeves" are also Pat Severs (who still performs with Don McClean of *American Pie* fame); saxophonist Craig Swift (who even played for the Pope!); Scott Graham (who was part of Billy Joel's team); Arne Benoni (a well known Norwegian singer/guitarist) and many more.

No matter what you do with re-mastering and overdubs you're not going to make Reeves' vocals any less smooth and velvety and the new arrangements are always sympathetically done. I suppose, if you know Reeves' material inside out some of these might take a bit of getting used to, but approached with a mind open to some



Top: Vocalist Kenzie Wetz  
 Above: Larry Jordan  
 Left: A great shot of Jim from the accompanying booklet

new music are all hugely enjoyable, and quite often a bit more 'country' than the original recordings.

Jim Reeves is of course the ultimate country crossover artist, and his most popular recordings were indicative of the Countryopolitan sound of Nashville going pop in the early 60s and had many a country fan (and Buck Owens) unhappy with the musical direction of

Music City. Reeves was a million miles from Hank Williams or Webb Pierce and I know people who only really rate his pre-57 recordings

as being true country, but Reeves found success globally with his smooth stylings and vocal prowess and this very reasonably priced set will be an absolute must-have for Reeves fans everywhere.

"After having been a fan since I was a young teen, knowing Jim's widow, Mary, for 33 years, and then working on my book, I have come to appreciate how much Jim's fans revere and treasure his music," says the *Jim Reeves: His Untold Story* author. "They simply can't get enough! Had he lived I think he would be singing to the sort of accompaniment we are now

providing him, which better compliment his incomparable voice."

If however, you are not a Reeves aficionado and have never knowingly heard his records you might be best to start out with a 20 golden greats-type compilation to test the water. Then, when you've come to the realisation that Reeves is one of the greatest voices of the 20th century come back and get this.

Jordan states, "This release is aimed at a mass market, including the casual fan who is perhaps only vaguely familiar with Jim, having heard a handful of his songs. The music is now

so beautiful and fresh - such as the duets we've created with Barbi Franklin and Kenzie Wetz adding their voices to Reeves' original tracks - that it is more likely to appeal to a broader audience."

If you're a life-long fan or not, it's hard to fault, especially at the price, and if you were still in any doubt Jordan encourages potential purchasers to listen to samples online at [www.thegreatjimreves.com](http://www.thegreatjimreves.com) or at his Reeves fan site ([www.jim-reeves.com](http://www.jim-reeves.com)) - and "judge for themselves." He concludes, "As someone has said, 'Jim sings better every day.'"

Duncan Warwick