

Ray Cooper – Land of Heroes | Westpark Music

Opening with the mandolin-led instrumental, “The Burning Pile”, inspired by the grizzly events of a 17th century witch trial in Ray Cooper’s adopted home of Sweden, which in a way serves as an overture to the songs that follow, the former Oysterband multi-instrumentalist looks at who our heroes might be today in the age of growing concern. Known as the cellist who by ditching the chair while also adding a harness to his instrument, made it entirely feasible for Woody Allen’s character in *Take the Money and Run* to indeed play in a marching band. There’s more to Ray Cooper though, who delivers these songs in a voice no dissimilar to that of Steve Knightly, especially in the spoken passages, bringing with it an almost preachy aspect. Locking himself away in his log cabin over summer, coming out only for the occasional swim in the nearby lake, Cooper has woven together these songs of consciousness, looking at such concerns as journalist whistle-blowers, the angel nurses and the occasional beast. ‘Welcome to the Middle Ages’ the singer announces at the beginning of “The Beast”, in a voice as confident as a circus ringmaster, considering how history repeats. Cooper finds heroes closer to home, notably in “Circles” where he fondly recalls a promoter friend, who went above and beyond the call of duty when booking gigs for the musician in Europe. Our friends and family members can be considered heroes, it doesn’t always have to be those in uniform or those on the posters upon our walls. Thought provoking in places.

