



**RAY DAVIES**

## CD REVIEW

**Ray Davies, *Thanksgiving Day***

Here's a mystery to ponder while dishing out your stuffing on Thursday: Why aren't songwriters inspired by Thanksgiving? When it comes to holiday songs, Christmas gets all the glory.

Leave it to Ray Davies, that most British of songwriters, to take up the challenge – he embraces the most American of holidays and gives it the love it deserves.

The title song for this five-track EP – a teaser for the Kinks mastermind's first solo album in February – teems with the kind of bittersweet observations that inhabit Davies' best work.

To Davies, Thanksgiving is a special time for families to get together, but it's also a time for re-evaluation and remembrance. A widower welcomes his children home but yearns for his lost wife; a spinster aches for affection; a truck driver ponders his mistakes as he stops along his cross-country route.

It's a microcosm of "the American way," all wrapped up into a five-minute tune with a catchy chorus that will stick in your mind long after the leftover turkey has been eaten.

Production-wise, the song is reminiscent of The Kinks' "rock opera" years of the mid-1970s: a Hammond organ intro, a horn section, a choir that joins Davies on the choruses. Yet it somehow has a timeless quality to it, and Davies' voice only improves with age.

The EP is rounded out by previously released tracks, but they may be new to some listeners.

*London Song* and *Storyteller* are alternate versions of songs from his 1998 live album, *The Storyteller*. Tougher to track down has been *Yours Truly, Confused N10*, a common man's plea for global sanity that was recorded with British bandleader Jools Holland. Also included is a different mix of *Thanksgiving Day*.

Part of the proceeds from the EP, released Tuesday, will be donated (in the wake of Hurricane Katrina) to a New Orleans music education program, and Davies will appear on *Late Night With Conan O'Brien* on Thanksgiving night.

– Chris Kocher