



THE OWL HAS LANDED

Esquela is an eclectic blend of happy juxtapositions: super-hip yet steeped in rural roots and classical sensibilities, indie and edgy yet organic, groovy and folkish. Esquela is a place where low-fi and bleeding-edge coincide happily in the same mix and where apparent playful irreverence is actually deeply cerebral (and hooks are huge, and everywhere). Esquela is quirky and different, yet familiar and immediately relatable in a wonderful way. The band drives the point home via masterful performances and through its deeply considered material that never fails to set toes to tapping and smiles to cracking. Esquela is indie-folk-soul-rock with a honky-tonk edge, a sense of humor, and a sense of history.

The Owl Has Landed, Esquela's new album (April 2010), doesn't sound like any band's "first release," and this is by no happy accident. Front-man Chico (John Finn: bass, vocals) has been writing and performing with lead-guitarist Keith Christopher since 2001. The Owl Has Landed is the inspired yield of years of soulful-contemplation, nurturing, battle-testing, and friendship. It's the introspective story of a polite farm boy in search of his fortune, who becomes a thoughtful and concerned world citizen while retaining his small-town ideals, mixed into a lavish tapestry of inspired performances and lively orchestration, rich with vocal harmonies, guitars, and percussion.

Keith Christopher brings a wealth of professional experience, knowledge, and chops to Esquela, and to The Owl Has Landed (which he co-wrote with Chico). Christopher was an original member of the Georgia Satellites, and has worked with the likes of Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Billy Joe Shaver, Tony Joe White, Paul Westerberg, and Todd Snyder. Christopher is an accomplished songsmith, as well. As one of his many song-writing credits, the legendary Ray Charles recorded a Christopher song, entitled "Over the Top," and featured it on his 1988 album, *Just Between Us*. Christopher is a uniquely-gifted multi-instrumentalist, a visionary composer, and a constant source of good humor and inspiration.

The Owl's producer, Eric "Roscoe" Ambel, is an industry veteran and all-star, as well. Ambel has served as producer for such hit acts as Ryan Adams, Marshall Crenshaw, Freddy Johnston, Mojo Nixon, Robert Randolph, and Bottle Rockets, among many others. Ambel was also a founding member of Joan Jett & The Blackhearts, and the Del-Lords. He toured and recorded (guitar) with Steve Earl & the Dukes from 2000 through 2005, and was featured on Earl's 2005 Grammy Award winning album *The Revolution Starts Now*. In working with Esquela on *The Owl Has Landed*, Ambel turned great ideas into delightful, moving, musical achievements.

Of all of The Owl's essential elements and stirring components, lead-vocalist Rebecca Frame's contributions shine the brightest. Her powerful delivery and soulful, emotional tone brings The Owl to a higher level, and immediately draws comparison to the likes of Janis Joplin and Bonnie Raitt. She hits notes with slick, strong, surgical precision, but not at the expense of the "rural roots" nature of the material. Frame is a tremendous, energetic talent, and Esquela, wisely, works consciously to showcase her incredible gifts at every opportunity.

Esquela has also completed the video for The Owl's first single: "Hands on my Jammies," which was directed and co-written by ace filmmaker Andrew Huang. Huang was listed as being one of the top "Directors to Watch" in 2008 by *Creativity Magazine*, and his heralded hit short "Doll Face" earned him world-wide fame by 2007, along with more than 2 million YouTube hits. Huang has also worked with the likes of 50 Cent, Jay-Z, Diddy, Ludacris, Jonas Brothers, and Pharrell for MTV.

The Owl Has Landed is a smart, endearing effort. Bigger than the confines of any genre-appropriate classification, The Owl bridges the chasm between modern musical technology and classical warmth and comfort by remaining mindful of its roots and purpose throughout. Loading up a project with top-shelf talent, from top to bottom, is never a guarantee in and of itself. However, *The Owl Has Landed* hits the bulls-eye in a most discernable fashion. Don't sleep on Esquela: this band is the real deal.