

Mp3 Darryl Purpose - Travelers' Code



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Smart Folk-Pop from "america's best narrative songwriter since Harry Chapin" 11 MP3 Songs POP: Quirky, POP: with Live-band Production Details: DULUTH NEWS TRIBUNE December 7, 2001 Purpose in life by V. Paul Virtucio When gambling turned out to be just craps, Darryl Purpose found a more meaningful life writing and singing folk Folk singer Darryl Purpose has lived two lives. He once was a rambling, gambling man, making a living as a blackjack player with a handful of cards. Now he's a roaming, guitar-playing man, traveling from coffeehouse to folk festival with a satchel full of original songs. Once out to "beat the house," gambler's parlance for winning more money than a casino would allow, Purpose is now out to "fill the house" with an audience. "You'll note that they're both playing. I've never really worked in my life," said the 44-year-old singer/songwriter from Vermont. "The difference is when you get good at blackjack, people ask you to leave. When you get good at music, they ask you to come back." Purpose will make his second Duluth appearance at the Amazing Grace Bakery and Cafe in Canal Park at 9 p.m. Saturday. He's out promoting his fourth CD, "A Crooked Line," which is filled with tunes about other itinerant characters he has met in his travels. Purpose was turned on to gambling and guitars by his mother when he was a teen. She gave him his first guitar, which he strummed as he listened to musicians such as Paul Simon, Jackson Brown and Bruce Cockburn. When he was 16, his mother slipped the book "Beat the Dealer" into his Christmas stocking. By the time he was 23, Purpose said, his photo was posted in casinos across the country as someone dealers shouldn't let play. By age 26, he was making a living counting cards but grew sick of his lifestyle in his 30s. "I tell that story a lot about the Christmas stocking," Purpose said. "I'd like to say that I've forgiven her because after all, she'd given me my first guitar, too." Purpose returned to his guitar after a run-in with the federales. Six years ago, Purpose walked into a bank and bought a large cashier's check with his friend's money. Purpose did

it as a favor since he had access to several false IDs, ones he used to get into casinos unnoticed. Purpose got noticed at the bank and found himself busted for laundering money. Federal officials realized he was just one guy on a lower rung so he escaped jail time by helping them catch the real money launderers. Since his probation meant he couldn't gamble to make ends meet, Purpose figured he'd give songwriting a shot. While on the road gambling, he had penned a number of tunes. In 1996, he compiled them on a CD that he tried to sell over the Internet. That's when he found a booking agent who took an interest in his music and put him on the road -- at first driving 500 miles to play for tips. It was a far cry from his days earning thousands of dollars on a winning hand. "Blackjack is at best about nothing... There's a lot of negative psychic energy in casinos. There's a lot of desperation," Purpose said. "Music is where my heart is. It's always what I've wanted to do. I just had gambling to fall back on." Since successfully ending probation, Purpose hasn't returned to gambling. Instead he has focused on his songwriting, creating lyrical narratives a la Dave Carter, Paul Simon and Minnesotan Peter Mayer. Purpose writes songs about his experiences on the road or stories he hears from people he meets in his travels. He also co-writes songs with musicians Ellis Paul and Paul Zollo, because he said, "I find a great half-song." "I don't set aside time to write. It happens when I'm compelled by a story and when I have some free time," Purpose said. "I have a very short attention span for writing and the truth is I feel like I've done really good without really trying." The first track on "A Crooked Line" is "California." It's about a turn-of-the-century politician who became president even though he didn't win the popular vote -- Rutherford B. Hayes. Purpose wrote the song about an obscure president as a metaphor for current events, he said. "Bryant Street," which he wrote with Ellis Paul, tells about Purpose's search for his half-brothers -- his father's second family after divorcing his mother -- who didn't know Purpose even existed. The song takes its name from the street where Purpose's half-sister had drowned in a pool 37 years ago. It was her death certificate that eventually led him to her family. "It's an unfolding story, the whole getting-to-know the half-brothers," Purpose said. In a conversation with one, Purpose said, "You know, I'm not good at birthdays." His brother responded, "It's all right, man. We're low maintenance. Just know there's a few more in the world out there who love you." That kind of personal connection is what Purpose chases in his music. He travels to get closer to people, to get more intimate stories and to share what he finds with his listeners. "The great thing about music for me is that I can be who I am and that's OK," Purpose said. "When I was playing blackjack for all those years, you cannot be who you were. You

were always worried about being found out... I just love going through my life now knowing that I don't have to pretend."

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