## Mp3 Dennis Jay - What You See



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Dennis Jay "reflects Gillian Welch's talent for channeling antique voices from the lost history of American music. Jay, though, has picked that signal just post-Appalachia, somewhere in the bandwidth between Jimmie Rogers and Tex Ritter." (No Depression) 12 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Traditional Country, COUNTRY: Country Folk Details: The critics are calling Dennis Jay's music "cowboy minimalism." Dennis calls it "Folk Western," the label once given to the classic sounds of Ernest Tubb, Lefty Frizzell, Hank Williams, and Marty Robbins. Born in Wisconsin, Dennis got a large part of his early musical education as a child in Germany, when "every day I'd come home from school and turn on the Armed Forces Radio Network (AFN). Most of the DJs were regular GIs who'd brought their record collections overseas. A lot of the music was from the south and they'd play a lot of rhythm and blues and a lot of country music. Back then the armed forces were one of the most integrated parts of society, and that was reflected in what the DJs played. It was all just music - not black music, not white music - and most of it was somewhat out of date, since there wasn't the emphasis on constantly playing the current top 10 hits of the time." After returning to the United States, Dennis attended high school in Maryland. He soon bought a brand new Martin D-18 and began writing songs. "It's still the guitar I write 'em on," he says. Dennis spent the 70s and 80s traveling around the West and Midwest, including Kansas, Colorado, Nevada, California, Oregon, Montana, Minnesota, and North Dakota, playing in coffee houses and bars, writing songs, and working odd jobs. When he reached Austin, Texas, Dennis performed both as a solo act and with a band. Next stop was Washington, DC, in the mid-80s, where he formed his own band. He did an occasional solo gig, such as opening for Steve Earle at the Birchmere. Then, for most of the '90s, he got out of music altogether. As Dennis puts it, "I had pretty much quit the music business. But part of the reason I started playing again was that I discovered a footlocker, in my basement, of copyright tapes that I'd mailed to

myself years ago." Dennis opened all those envelopes and began listening to his old songs. He liked enough of what he heard that he decided to give them a second life. "I really wanted to get in the studio and record these songs in the spirit in which I'd written them," he says. That meant the stripped-down Folk Western sound captured on his debut CD, "What You See." Joining Dennis in the studio were band members Tim Griffin on lead guitar and Bob Graver on bass (both also on backing vocals), as well as local musicians Fannie Zollicoffer on guest vocals, Susan Jones on fiddle, and Joe Connell on percussion. Co-producer/engineer Dave McKittrick co-wrote and played guitar on an original instrumental, "Cancion para la Noche de Casamiento." The musicians recorded absolutely live, in a semicircle around the microphones, the way it was done years ago. Despite the odd missed note, the old-style technique captures a tight, emotional performance that sounds alive and of the moment. For the past two years, Dennis has been nominated for WAMA (Washington Area Music Association) awards in the following categories: best country music vocalist, best country music group, and best country music CD. One of Dennis's songs, "That Last Night," was recorded by blues singer Janine Wilson on her CD "The Blue Album." Absorbing the influences of traditional C&W, folk, and Mexican ballads, Dennis Jay has a driving rhythm guitar style to power his songs and a rich, resonant voice to sing them. It's an original voice of passion, which can recall a trail ride into the Badlands, heartache at midnight, and a couple of shots of mezcal.

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