

Mp3 Switchback - Falling Water River



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A sparse and powerful work sure to surprise long-time fans and move the hearts of new ones, "Falling Water River" follows the story of young William Henry as he experiences the emotions of war in this conceptually themed CD. 10 MP3 Songs FOLK: Traditional Folk, COUNTRY: Country Folk Details: FALLING WATER RIVER: THE HUMAN TOLL OF WAR by David McGee On their ninth album, the roots duo Switchback takes the measure of the times and the measure of a life in the story of Private William Henry whose story is our story Listen close. It comes in from the distance and suddenly announces itself, a screaming across the sky, to cop a phrase from Thomas Pynchons V. From there unfolds a story of heretofore unknown William Henry, a country boy from Tennessee fighting for his country a world away from the life he knew. In William Henry, Martin McCormack and Brian FitzGerald, a Chicago-based roots duo who have been performing and recording as Switchback for nine albums now, find a universal story of the horrors of war as humanity has experienced it from the beginning of recorded history. At the same time, without being overtly political about it, the duo transcends the banality of the war and the politics driving the conflict to reach a place of pure humanity, where the eternal pull of youthful dreams and desires, fear and memory coalesce into a beautifully realized, poignantly documented abbreviated life's journey. The album is titled Falling Water River, and it comes along at a time when a clear majority of the American public believes this countrys invasion of Iraq was a mistake. It arrives at a time when a growing number of popular artists are offering their own protests-in-song lashing out at the mind- and soul-numbing news from the Middle East and the ongoing fumbling and duplicity of the current administration in Washington. James McMurtry, Pink, Pearl Jam, Green Day, Kanye West, Rodney Crowell and, more recently and more notoriously, Neil Young (who demands outright, Impeach the President!) have all weighed in with their own barbaric yawps aimed at the Masters of War in the Capitol.

Falling Water River takes a different tack. In tracking the life, turbulent times and violent death of Private William Henry, it feels like an elegy, not a screed. It takes the measure of the times, and the measure of a life, in beautifully drawn scenes that betray both McCormacks and FitzGerald's Irish roots in buoyant harmonies, winsome melodies, in lyrics that reflect a deep love of life in all its varieties and a profound connection to and abiding love for the land even as they establish a point of view that is less about lashing out than about understanding the human toll violence extracts, how one death resonates and ripples through the multitude of suddenly altered lives of family and friends. At the same time, the artists don't hesitate to use other flourishes at their command to sculpt a soundscape that belies the often serene nature of the ten songs that form their tale. Apart from the aforementioned sonic howl that launches the album opening instrumental, the eerie, ethereal, Stars Over Balad, the sonic motif of Falling Water River embraces otherworldly voices, the sound of boots stomping (Frightened By Little Things), aggressive hand clapping (Looking At Love) and the like. And everywhere, it seems, are disembodied voices moaning and chanting, a ghostly Greek chorus singing an eternal dirge in response to the waste of war. All in all, Falling Water River's elegant conceptual conceit and humanistic overview, as well as its acute sense of the mood of the moment, brook legitimate comparison to Simon and Garfunkel's towering Bookends album, a moving and deeply textured reflection on mortality that was released in 1967, at the very moment the American public began to turn on another unpopular war abroad. (Fittingly, one of the most affecting songs on the album, Carry Me, employs Simon-like sound signatures in its jazzy, acoustic guitar inflections, and naked lead vocal elevating over a spare sonic landscape.) And like Simon's songs, McCormack's and FitzGerald's often reveal a startling duality: the comforting sentiments and lilting melody of The Last Lullabye soon give way to the understanding that the fellows are describing a body being prepared for burial. Similarly, the title track, which closes the album, is a toe-tapping mountain ballad featuring some exquisite mandolin punctuations courtesy FitzGerald, a good-time, old-timey excursion into the backwoods except that it explicitly describes the death of William Henry and its tragic aftermath. And whereas it's dangerous to single out any one song here as the linchpin for the whole enterprise, the three-and-a-half-minute-plus Far From The Fighting Is, which precedes Falling Water River, seems to fit the bill. For here, in a keening vocal and solid acoustic guitar-and-bass thump, is a story decrying a cycle of violence that clearly begins in Iraq (it may well be the first song to mention IEDs in its lyrics) but also references suicide bombers, warlords and killing machines, which could be the warrior monks and the

bloody legacy of the Crusades to the Nazis to the janjaweed militia in Darfur and on and on. The questions this song raises are valid here and now, just as they would have been centuries ago. Packaged in a triangular case that makes it look like a flag resting on a coffin, Falling Water River is an album every concerned citizen needs to hear. The beauty of Switchbacks achievement is that principals McCormack and FitzGerald never forget to be musical, never let their storytelling become pamphleteering, and keep a hard focus on a flesh-and-blood tale that brings the issue at hand back to its proper perspective. Private William Henry may be a figment of the musicians imaginations, but Switchback breathes life into him and his times. His story is our story. To ignore it is to encourage the mayhem. David McGee, country music editor for barnesandnoble and regular contributor to The Absolute Sound is the author of biographies of Carl Perkins, B.B. King and Steve Earle CATCH EVERY NUANCE OF THIS ALBUM!!! Mary Palmer, director of programming High Plains Public Radio hppr.org Martin McCormack and Brian FitzGerald began playing together over a decade ago and have woven a seamless sound that is much in-demand. These two passionate musicians live in two different states now but youd never know it from the new CD Falling Water River. The focus of the CD is the inner lives of the soldiers. Rather than focusing on the politics of this on-going conflict in the Middle East, McCormack and FitzGerald turned their laser vision and powerful pens to the individuals who are actually on the frontlines. Dont let this description fool you. This is vintage Switchback, toe tapping tunes that illustrate the powerful melodies and belie the emotional lyrics. Looking At Love is a song that illustrates the desire to live the love song life for many soldiers. They have one foot in duty while trying to keep one foot in the sanity of normal life. Frightened By the Little Things and Falling Water River are great songs that you will find yourself singing along with until you hear the words coming out of your mouth. What a shock to have such a great driving tune that features the battle field induced paranoia that all combatants have had to face since the beginning of time. The goose-bump inducing Requiem and Stars Over Ballad will leave the most hardened leather-neck with tear streaks. What is it about this particular CD that seems to be filled with dichotomous ideas presented in such a seamless way? Its the perfectionism that Switchback bring to their performance on each instrument. Its the honesty in the Irish tenor that dips down into the belly in a range that will leave you guessing how many guys are in this band anyway? Its the ability to walk around in anothers shoes and then bring you those travels in music that seems so familiar and yet unique. Its the Switchback sound and you will find yourself listening over and over again to catch every nuance.

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