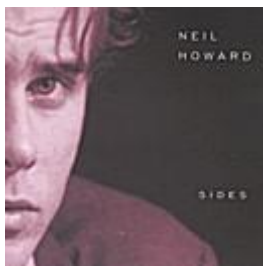


Mp3 Neil Howard - Sides



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"...a combination of Tom Waits, Leonard Cohen, and David Bowie...Howard possesses a voice that is, at once, rough around the edges and perfectly melodic..." - SFWeekly 12 MP3 Songs ROCK: Folk Rock, FOLK: Modern Folk Details: FROM THE SFWEEKLY: "...Singer/songwriter Neil Howard has been described as a combination of Tom Waits, Leonard Cohen, and David Bowie, but if Richard Butler had ever performed acoustic torch songs such complicated comparisons would not be necessary. Like Butler, Howard possesses a voice that is, at once, rough around the edges and perfectly melodic, and while Howard eschews politics and social commentary in favor of matters of the heart, in his world, love is equally sad, mad, and corrupt...Howard's songs are not a vague sonic conveyance for his voice or his words. They are fully realized -- dare I say -- pop songs, slowed down and drawn out with melancholic sophistication, tense arrangements, and wistful restraint. It's little surprise, then, that a band has grown quickly around Howard to record this material. The New Black consists only of three members - Howard in the company of the consistently classy drummer Joey Sunset and the ever-modest Roy Elder on upright bass -which is just right, since there is little room for embellishment of the songs represented on Howard's live solo recording, Sides, except to distance him from those who assume an acoustic guitar must a folk singer make. 'Daylight,' the clear single on both Sides and the New Black's eponymous four-song EP, is a powerful introduction to Howard's aesthetic. A brooding love song delivered by a bartender to a sinking alcoholic beauty, it is driven by a punchy guitar riff and Howard's raspy hero's chorus, 'If I could just hold you all night/ If I could just show you daylight/ I could be the one who makes you whole/ Not just the one who takes you home.' My second choice of single, 'Turns Like Leaves,' is a ballad whose musical aggression belies its lyrical comparison of a girl to flowers whose 'fingers reach for doors like sunlight for gardens.' Clever even in its vulnerability and catchy as all hell, it surely would have

made Richard Butler weep back in the day. 'All the One,' which appears only on Sides, is powered by Howard's fierce, galloping guitar, while his observations -- 'The harder that you fall/ The softer you become' -- are delivered in a soothing late-night whisper. All of the songs seem to follow cracks in the heart and mind, and, despite Howard's dismissal of organized religion (as made evident in the brilliant 'We Can't Belong' from Sides), the trappings and tyranny of faith are rife throughout the dysfunction. Howard counts angels on the head of a pin, recounts sin and righteousness, and looks for redemption in the eyes of love, in spite of all evidence to the contrary. Let's hope he stays smart and never gets wise." - Silke Tudor sfweekly| originally published: July 7, 2004

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