

# Mp3 Paul Kotheimer - Song About Everything



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This virtual box set MP3CD contains over 5 hours of music. 100 songs. Twenty folking years of DIY poetical, personal, and political acoustic music from one of the finest songwriters you've never heard of. 100 MP3 Songs FOLK: Alternative Folk, FOLK: Political Folk Details: A SERIOUS FOLKING DOCUMENT THE POETICS OF PAUL KOTHEIMER'S SONG ABOUT EVERYTHING by William Gillespie spinelessbooks.com Recently, Andy Partridge turned his back on a music industry that never truly embraced him, and self-published the eight-volume home demo archive Fuzzy Warbles, a majestic testament to a brilliant composer--a good life's work packaged artfully, playfully, exactly as Andy intended. And now Paul Kotheimer has released the first two decades of his own work on one MP3 CD. This is a serious folking document. This essay won't touch on how Paul's self-produced CDs made it possible for me to do what I do. It's funny how the same act of self-publishing can seem like a desperate bid for the artist who cannot connect with the industry, and a bold and courageous statement to his fans: those who appreciate the work as much as they would a commercial product with a distant corporate backer, and admire even more that it came seemingly out the artist's sleeve, which could be a point of shame for some writers. DIY or die; I'm just sayin'. Activism isn't all politics. There are these quiet songs that tell portraits. When I hear certain folksingers sing about the masters and victims of war, sometimes I can't shake the feeling they are singing about themselves, their concern, their chops, their courage, their gravelly voices. When Paul sings "Strange Days Richard" or "Ghost Town Youths" he has disappeared into a wisp of haze through which another person can be glimpsed. I enter a world of a few lonely people nobody knows. It is this that attracts me to my favorite novels--their authorlessness, how they commit unspeakable magic by spinning a universe around characters who are not at the center of anything, who would be hard to take in person, who do not deserve books. Writers thus unclog arteries, hearts shooting

sparks. The self-immolation of sympathy. When writing or singing, the millions killed or displaced can't be processed. When writing or singing about Josie, there's something conspicuous and hard to work around. These songs stand in our way--why are they there? Why is he spending our time on this? Art is the heart beating behind professors, protest, politics, and policy. Worthy legislation and the victories of heroes of courtrooms, lives saved, have roots here, watered by silent tears in the basements of cheap structures, the rented rooms of student houses, the brownstone twoflats of patient moms. My Kotheimer is different from his, from yours, from theirs. These songs like "Your Easy Chair" enter and exit silently, in the margins, in the wings of recorded music and activism and art and power players and loudmouths crashing symbols. I have never heard Paul play most of these live, and many people will never hear them at all, and won't notice them if they do, or reduce them to a fragment rather than opening their heart to the monstrous capacity for tolerance they demand of the listener. "Day Job." These gems are pure, dragged up from the fecund earth, their performance, composition, arrangement indistinguishable. They exist before and after, too perfect to ever have been constructed. I like having mood swings now. It's like the ocean. When you go to the beach, whether you want to splash around, build sand castles, or swim out into the deep, it's going to be all about the waves. Emotion is like that. It pulls you forward, drags you back, knocks you down, sucks you under. If you fight it, you lose; you can only accept and dance with it and hope it will take you where you are trying to go. Without these songs, the noble protest anthems empty out for me. Without that capacity for compassion, compassion precisely for nobody, those who don't matter, who aren't aggressors or victims, who demand no attention, who history rolls over without even crushing, the mammals who peer from roots during the age of the big lizard, the meek. They take you, these songs, into the smelly bedrooms, the littered back seats of cars, the ashtrays and coffeepots of the lonely. I still own the original typewritten lyrics to "Dead Friend." What a curious number that is. It has grown on me almost as slowly as its own harmony and grammar, and hearing it here allows me to contextualize it among other story songs. Did Josie commit suicide? Or did she literally fly away like Supergirl? We don't know, and this mystery is a rift as sweet and sad and terrible and mysterious as the effect of missing the intro to "Dog Heaven" and listening to a song that seems like an oddly warm personification of misery. There is an economy that doesn't even have to rhyme, but is song so sweetly you don't notice, a musical prose. There is a cornucopia of poetry upended in "Waltz," a rough and authentic dance of elegance and prole logos. \*\*\* Dear Paul, you don't know how lucky you are, and never

will. I, a guy who has more songs in his living room than you do days in your life, thinks you are for real, so pure I won't even bullshit you, and I am prepared to bullshit any musician or friend or local artist just to be encouraging, because it's the right thing to do, to bullshit people, to nurture art in this kind of world, whatever form it takes. But you, you, have a gift. These songs go places nobody else can reach, and come at me from angles I am unprepared to defend myself against, puncture me in a spray of tears, and never, ever, for too long, get old. It never matters if you don't get played on college radio, if fuckers steal all your bass guitars, throw you out of their bands, don't pay you for the shit you did. You got a line on eternity, you are dialed in to the human soul. You got a thing compared to which none of this can matter, this puppet play we stage on the flimsy blacktop of this teetering world, with its brokers and buyers and jokers and liars. You are still my friend and I cherish you and your mind, your hands. The MP3CD is my new favorite musical medium, because it allows me to put the entire corpus of a favorite musician in one mammoth mix (a few, like Beethoven and Bowie, require more than one MP3CD). But it's too big a mix to arrange by hand so I always fall back on the strategy of putting the songs in alphabetic order. This allows for the surprising, revealing juxtapositions of shuffle play, but creates a certain dramatic architecture that mirrors that of the alphabet, starting strong, climaxing in the Ts, and with everything that follows a quirky coda (X songs, for example, are usually weird). It seems that Paul has, independently, hit on the same technique. So the mix ends with one of my most cherished Kotheimers--the relentlessly subtle, uncanny, chorusless, hookless, devastatingly poetic and melancholy "Your Easy Chair"--a masterpiece I feel privileged to appreciate.

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