

Mp3 Fred Smith - Texas



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One of Australia's most dynamic and respected songwriters offers both comical and serious reflections on 3 years spent in the USA during the Second term of Bush. 12 MP3 Songs in this album (48:54) ! Related styles: FOLK: Urban Folk, COUNTRY: Alt-Country People who are interested in Bruce Springsteen Paul Simon Paul Kelly should consider this download. Details: Fred Smith performs as Iain Campbell Smith in the Northern Hemisphere Warwick McFadyen , the Sunday Age, 4 April 2008 Texas Fred Smith, Independent Fred Smith is one of this country's most literate, humorous, intelligent and empathic songwriters. He plies his craft, however, at the margins and for that, lamentably, his name seems destined to be well-known on the folk circuits and unknown by the mainstream. Texas follows on from Independence Park and Bagarap Empires, the songs moving from the South Pacific to his past three years in the US. Smith breezes across country, folk, soul and blues to deliver his wry observations on American life. He goes on the road with Jack Kerouac and Walt Whitman and performs one of the most beautiful laments for the Civil War, written by American Rich Deans, titled Don't Dig My Grave Too Deep. Key track: American Guitar. Smith is a master of the metaphor, and on American Guitar he merges his own journey in the US with the country's history and aspirations. Mike Raine, Indie CD's: Fred Smith's three years in the United States has served him in good stead; from the tracks on Texas you would be hard put to believe he had not served a lifetime apprenticeship to Woodie Guthrie. Here we have an audio collage of (mainly) rural America: the yucca, sage brush, the dusty gas stations on a road to nowhere, the bar with a cow skull on the wall above a Wurlitzer juke box with a picture of a girl whirling a lariat, while two grizzle-faced old timers hawk tobacco juice and look at this Australian traveller with rheumy eyes. It is an aural journal of Freds travels across the States, in which departures and destinations are scattered like signposts throughout the tracks, linked by the thread of Freds immense story-telling ability in song. Each

track is a vignette; brief snapshots that build up this collage, culminating in the six-and-a-half minutes epic cinemascope of American Guitar which seems to summarise the whole trek. In Texas we hitch a ride with an opportunistic hell-raiser who holds the secret of success at Corpus Christi (sensually and geographically equivalent to the map of Tasmania), who ends up taking our travellers pride and fortune. God Bless America is a sharp-eyed satire on the shallow consumerism and excesses of middle America. So Much Crime dwells on the incongruity of a country that is oblivious to its battlers while it commits billions of dollars on wars of dubious integrity. Fred is a brilliant social commentator (with broken wings and tangled strings and from all the wars with our puppeteer), though his political commentary skirts perilously close to the bumper stickers of populist opinion (all those sons and daughters who aint never coming back). Though Fred has developed his own style, and on this CD, the quirky combination of American imagery narrated with an Australian accent, it is possible to sense the musical ancestry of many of these songs. For example, Seven Ways has a Paul Simon flavour, particularly in its whimsical understatement: trying to stay calm might have been better than breaking his arm. Dont Dig My Grave Too Deep, a track contributed by Rich Deans, owes no small allegiance in feel to Gordon Lightfoot or Luka Bloom. There reminds me of Lou Reed. Deep Deep River has the swampy feel of John Fogerty coupled with the dryness of Johnny Cash. And the glockenspiel in Takoma Park is so Buddy Holly! But melodically the track is smeared with Ray Davies and UK Squeeze. Freds voice treads on these songs lightly, almost as if bewildered by the sights and sounds that open up before him, for example, almost sounding breathless on Texas. But he sings with an intimate affinity for the subject at hand. His guitar is tastefully played; then again, just about everything about this CD is tasteful: great instrumentation, great arrangements, great recording values. Perhaps the kit is a touch overplayed in So Much Crime, a minor criticism when everything else sounds so good. This is due, I guess, to the clever crew of musicians who have contributed to this musical journey; I counted thirteen, not counting Fred, so Ill leave you to read the liner notes rather than list them all here (which, then, might encourage you to buy it. You wont be sorry!). This is a wonderful CD to add to your collection. Review by Mike Raine 2008. indie-cds.com/

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