

## Mp3 Billy Gewin - Good, Smart Bear



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Twangy folk/rock/jazz/alt-country with clever lyrics. 17 MP3 Songs POP: Folky Pop, ROCK: Roots Rock

Details: Multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and producer, Billy Gewin has been making music in the Atlanta area for the last 15 years. The first thing you notice about Billy's songwriting is that the lyrics are unselfconscious and honest. Next is the range of accessible melodies and cascading harmonies that aren't afraid to start below the staff and work their way well above and back down again. Lastly, this is not music for the lowest common denominator. Billy prefers to align himself with artists who have spent most of their careers challenging the mainstream: songwriters/composers like Shawn Colvin, Billy Bragg, Elvis Costello, Ben Folds, Paul Westerberg and George Gershwin; and groups like U2, Steely Dan, Cold Play, and Wilco. As the cliché goes, after the usual stint with high school and cover bands, and supporting roles playing other writers' music, a girlfriend encouraged him to venture out on his own. His first self-produced CD released in 1999 was with power pop trio The Geckos. It was a collection of hilarious odes to paranoia, UFOs, overweight lovers, and sperm donors, anchored by prolific guitar/bass/drum playing, and carefully augmented with clever keyboard and horn embellishments, rich harmonies and an occasional unexpected tempo or chord change. In 2001, Billy released his first true solo release *Good, Smart Bear* exhibiting a more organic, mature sound and style, exploring everything from failed relationships to immigration policy. The CD's title (a nod to author John Irving) and opening lines set the stage for the more thoughtful and literary allegory that he has continued to perfect: In saying the city's the same as me I'll tell you something about this town If I don't get lost in my own analogy I'll tell you something about me While still chock full of musical easter eggs for the more than casual listener, emphasis was placed on the songs themselves rather than on musical acrobatics. If *Good, Smart Bear* was lyrically more introverted, his 2003 release, *Hodges Shant Be Shot*, was a more extroverted affair touching on themes of outreach,

interpersonal connection, responsibility, love, empathy, cynicism and hope - at times angry, and at others, tongue in cheek. Standouts include the CDs opener Dont Let Me Down with its sing-along chorus, and the powerful harmonies on the acapella, call-and-response Sugarland. So, whats in store for 2007? The new songs are a little less jazzy and a little more twangy, says Gewin. Lyrically its a little more intense, with themes having to do with profound loss and recovery. Its about looking trouble in the eye, and trying to do the best you can with what you have to work with its not all bummer stuff, though! The CD will also include his first recorded cover song Elvis Costello and Aimee Manns Telescope. - Marc Desandre

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