

Mp3 Ed Gray - The Late Gray Ed Great



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Old school lo-fi hometaper folk/noise guy goes to Omaha and records f***ed up "alt. country" with members of Simon Joyner and the Fallen Men, Lambchop, Bright Eyes, etc. etc. that's actually a real tearjerker, go figure. 9 MP3 Songs FOLK: Power-folk, COUNTRY: Country Rock Details: When an artist resists the need for speed, a certain vulnerability emerges; one that can't get away. Ed Gray's music is stark, dark, and lo-fi. Were it to simply whiz by you might say punk. But in its restraint it borders on symphonic. On his new CD, *The Late Gray Ed Great*, this Iowa City songwriter sounds relatively alone even while surrounded by strings and various instruments that flirt slightly with dissonance. Come to think of it, so does his voice. It's odd and lonely and haunting. - Frank De Blase, Rochester City News. The preponderance of home recording in the 1990s opened a window to a whole world of low fidelity--a hissy wonderland of broken hearts and lost causes. A decade later, many of these artists have matured like fine wine, blossoming into something far greater than a homebody with an acoustic guitar and a Tascam four-track. The latest addition to this canon is Ed Gray's *The Late Gray Ed Great*. You may not be able to say it five times fast, but the Iowa City troubadour has crafted an intimate, warm little album that reinforces how far these cats have come. The list of players on the album reads like a Who's Who for people interested in Gray's scene. Fellow gloomy singer-songwriter Simon Joyner; Bright Eyes sidemen Alex McManus and Tiffany Kowalski; and Sing, Eunuchs! Records' Chris Deden round out Gray's supergroup of a backing band. And they do an admirable job of fleshing out the skeletons of Gray's songs. The tunes are all finely structured and uniformly string. Gray has taken the raw materials of a century of recorded folk, country, and rock and built a structure as solid as a log cabin. Take "Drink," for example. You can hear echoes of the Neil Young of yore stripped down to a wandering, reverb-drenched guitar line, building to a shambling full band reminiscent of the Band. It's a joy to hear folk make such a

racket. So much Americana ends up sounding like the yuppie fodder WCBE plays during the day--a sanitized, white-washed take on our cultural heritage that's about as close to the heart of America as Ronald McDonald's creepy smile. Instead, Ed Gray has a pedal steel plucking out a plaintive melody over top of a chugging guitar that spitting out feedback as it grinds to its close like does in "The Brambling Broad Side." The formula isn't exactly rocket science, and you wonder why there aren't a hundred bands in every town that sound like Ed Gray. Until then, the market is his. And as far as The Late Gray Ed Great goes, he's earned it. - Rick Allen, The Other Paper (Columbus). In Iowa City, the guy frying your eggs is working on a dissertation, and the guy next to you at the coffee shop discovers new elementary particles. Perhaps Iowa City's most unlikely genius is Ed Gray, grizzled guy who you might see opening a show at a local club with nothing more than a nylon-string guitar and a voice that ranges from an intimate baritone to the bellowing of a drunk shouting across a crowded bar. He put out a CD in 1998 on Super Kick Ass Music, and plays out from time to time, but his tendency to go from a slow dreamy country song into five minutes of howling feedback hasn't garnered him a huge following locally. The first time I saw him perform, he played a set so raw and shambling that it felt a little like listening to a homeless guy ranting on a street corner. It was great, but great in a way that seemed almost calculated to puzzle and repel an audience looking for comfortable folk music. The Late Gray Ed Great is a CD that finally brings Ed's scary talents as a songwriter into sharp focus...The craft Gray expends on his songs is as extravagant as it is unassuming, managing to sound conversational and dashed off, but so perfectly formed that they can't be as artless as they sound. Ed's singing and guitar playing are of a piece, sometimes delicate, sometimes unruly and wild, but always with an artless directness. Ed's art grows out of a paradox: When he plays nice, he's as good as anyone else, but when he reels out of control, he's great. He has a way of sounding positively broken that carries more emotional truth than conventional performers dare to show. Ed recorded this album last year with an all-star cast of Omaha musicians, including Simon Joyner, Tiffany Kowalski, Alex McManus and Chris Deden. Their additions, particularly the violin and pedal steel guitar [Friedman!], are spot on, enhancing with overshadowing Ed's playing and singing. The Late Gray Ed Great makes it finally clear that Ed Gray is one of the best songwriters in Iowa, and if you'll forgive me a Leonard Maltin corny finish: Better late than never. - Kent Williams, Little Village (Iowa City).

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