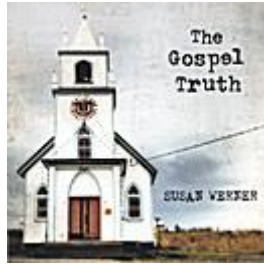


Mp3 Susan Werner - The Gospel Truth



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A socially conscious, contemporary gospel album, it balances the faithful and the agnostic in one collection of Susan Werner originals. The infectious joy of gospel music with lyrics almost anybody can agree with - and sing along to. 11 MP3 Songs FOLK: Political, GOSPEL: Contemporary Gospel Details: Inspiration for The Gospel Truth In the summer of 2006, as if the muse was tugging on her heartstrings, singer-songwriter Susan Werner attended the Chicago Gospel Music Festival in her adopted hometown for the first time. The overwhelming, ecstatic energy of the event prompted her friend Kenni to remark, Wow, is there a way you can get all this joy, but without the Jesus? This honest question sparked a remarkable creative odyssey that led Werner to pews in over 20 churches across the United States in search of The Gospel Truth, a groundbreaking independent collection that may just be the worlds first agnostic gospel recording. Tapping fearlessly into the zeitgeist of contemporary American religious culture, the eleven songs on The Gospel Truth are both heartfelt and incisive, biting yet optimistic, drawing from Werners own personal spiritual questions to engage the Christian community at large. Addressing those tough universal doubts that fundamentalists surely have but wish to God they could verbalize; Werner seeks common ground with her traditional religious counterparts in finding solutions to the issues that divide America. Fresh off the success of I Cant Be New, her critically acclaimed 2004 collection of all-original compositions done in the Great American Songbook style, Werners road to truth is paved by both witty observations of Christian culture and, musically, an ongoing love for classic gospel, country and bluegrass traditions. Just as she immersed herself in the songs of Gershwin, Cole Porter, et al and the classic interpretations by Julie London as part of her creative process on I Cant Be New, Werner this time was tireless in mining inspiration from legendary and contemporary country, gospel and bluegrass artists, from familiar names like The Carter Family and The Stanley Brothers, to the lesser

known Claire Lynch and Fern Jones (the co-called Patsy Cline of gospel). Someone suggested I do a blues album for my next project, and while toying with the idea, I came across the music of Blind Willie Johnson, a bluesman from the 1920s whose music went beyond my baby blues and into what you might call gospel blues. I liked his sense of transcendence, the spirit of conveying something beyond his own heartbreak. Then I attended the Chicago gospel festival and the energy of the music, the choirs was unlike anything I'd ever experienced.

The Most American of Americana Projects A farm girl, raised in a large Catholic family in rural Iowa, Werner spent years caught in the spiritual middle between a healthy religious skepticism and a true appreciation for all that Christianity means to millions of people in the United States. For me, The Gospel Truth is the most American of Americana projects, she says. My personal doubts aside, religion gives us much of our energy as a nation, and is a source, I think, of the beautiful naiveté we have about truly being a force of good in the world. It's part of the American personality. And I don't necessarily feel I have to get right with God, but I figure we have to somehow get all right with God because God's not leaving American life anytime soon. People all over the world want to give meaning to their life's journey and engage in a larger sense of purpose, Werner adds. Here, in the United States, it seems that churches are the default setting the first place you look for that sense of purpose. Overall, these songs convey my belief that doubt and faith can reside side by side in a good person. And, I guess I'd reached a time in life where I wanted to have this conversation with myself; to keep what my church-going parents got right while moving into what was true and right for me. And, while I'm not absolutely sure we encounter God through church music, I do know that church music is very revealing of us as human beings. And that's what The Gospel Truth is really all about.

The Songs on The Gospel Truth Werner's first step in getting at that truth is (Why Is Your) Heaven So Small, a pointed barb at the hypocrisy of narrow-minded one-way-to-heaven religiosity. Producer Glenn Barratt sets Werner's Appalachian gospel melody amidst groove-driven drums and sitars, which takes the song, as the singer sees it, from Kentucky to Katmandu. Werner mines the Bible's important passages on social justice in the sing-along hand-clapping rouser Help Somebody, while on the soul-searching, choir-backed ballad Forgiveness, she questions loving one's enemies when they so cruelly use religion as justification for discrimination and oppression. And Werner's neo-traditional bluegrass composition Did Trouble Me affirms the importance of conscience in a well-lived life. The introspective ballad Sunday Mornings takes Werner (and no doubt, thousands of listeners) back to their childhood memories of attending church with

their families, and to a time, not necessarily a better time, when strict, church approved gender roles ruled the day. Our Father, The New Revised Edition offers comic relief in the form of a direct prayer to God to deliver us from self-righteous people who think they speak for Him. Werner then dishes up a New Orleans styled shuffle for Lost My Religion, a kind of backsliders lament. Yet despite her doubts, Werner gives herself over to the evocative ballad Dont Explain It Away (a nod to the possibilities of mystical transcendence) and to the sing-along I Will Have My Portion, a song that perfectly captures Werners desire to have all the joy without the Jesus. The Gospel Truth closes with the truly agnostic gospel of the frank and humorous Probably Not and the hopeful Together, which imagines the kind of peaceful world God would want (if there is a God a question Werner leaves unanswered).

Susan Werners Background

Susan Werner made her first public performance at age five, playing guitar and singing (where else?) at church. She began playing piano when she was 11, and after earning a degree in voice from the University of Iowa, she completed her graduate studies at Temple University in Philadelphia, where she performed in recitals and operas. While shell still on occasion perform Madame Butterfly to close any one of the 125 club dates she does annually throughout the U.S. and Canada, she opted to forgo a career as an opera singer and dedicated herself to songwriting, performing at coffeehouses from Washington D.C. to Boston. Werner launched her recording career with the self-released Midwestern Saturday Night in 1993, which was followed by Live At Tin Angel in 1994. The second album impressed executives at Private Music/BMG, which released her major label debut Last Of The Good Straight Girls in 1995. She also received critical accolades for her subsequent recordings Time Between Trains (VelVel, 1998) and New Non-Fiction (Indie, 2001). She has toured the nation with acts such as Richard Thomson, Keb Mo and Joan Armatrading, and was featured in a 1998 Peter, Paul and Mary PBS special as one of the best of the next generation of folk songwriters. Independent Spirit

From her folk/pop beginnings, to the songbook flavored I Cant Be New and now The Gospel Truth, Werner relishes the challenges of being a creative free spirit and says shes in an exciting new phase of doing themed projects. Im consciously choosing to do that now, she says, not only because these types of projects challenge and interest me so much but because in a vast marketplace of ideas, Ive found that its good to give the audience a clear concept and a specific point of reference where we can engage each other. The music industry loves to pigeonhole recording artists, Werner adds, but I like to see myself as having more of a painters career, giving myself the freedom to try entirely new things, to incorporate new colors, new language into my

songs. And with The Gospel Truth, she says, I am trying to simply convey the reality of being a skeptic in a landscape of believers, what its like to sit there in the pew, and to see what feelings, what songs, show up. Some of these tunes are uncertain and distrusting, for sure, but some of these seem more beautiful and true than Id ever written in any other style on any other project. And I had to go back to church to get them. Who knew?

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