

Mp3 Ace Ford - Alkali



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The Texicana version of Americana--a performing balladeer with the soul of a poet and heart of a cowboy. 15 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Country Folk, FOLK: Traditional Folk Alkali Songs Details: About Ace Ford by Rust Russell There is no formula or pattern to the emergence of a musical scene; as if compulsive by destiny, sure populate come together at a exceptional time and identify and a sound is born. Sometimes the creative frenzy lasts only a few months, sometimes it becomes the foundation of an entire genre. In the early to mid-seventies, Austin, Texas buzzed with songwriting talent. Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt, Michael Martin Murphy and B.W. Stevenson regularly played the city's beer joints. Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings had returned to their native state and would soon scratch out the beginnings of the Outlaw movement. The creative spirit of that time and place transcended political and social barriers, as cowboys, hippies, blue-collar workers and bankers sat elbow-to-elbow listening to the music. For an eighteen-year-old college freshman from the tiny East-Texas burg of Tucker, moving to the Lone Star capitol was like stepping into another world, and Ace Ford jumped in with both feet. "Tucker had a barbecue joint, a general store and a couple of gas stations," recalls the self-described balladeer, now a fixture in the Nashville songwriting scene. "You'd look around and think-, 'man, I gotta get out of here.' Of course, when you finally do get away you start missing it immediately, and I guess I still do. There's something special about coming from a little place like that. I remember in college, we'd all sit around telling stories at night, and the populate from small towns seemed to have the most interesting tales to tell. You know, the time we took a cow down to the Dairy Queen or whatever. You had to invent things to do. You had to come up with your own entertainment." Ace was enamored of the writing life early and he always was fascinated by the idea of telling stories in song or prose. But he also admits that he comes from a long line of worriers, and the image of the starving artist never held much appeal. After

earning a degree in biology from UT Austin and a stint as athletic director at a small Catholic school, he began working toward a Ph.D. in kinesiology and accepted a position as a research associate at UCLA. "That was a very non-musical time in my life," Ace sighs. "I lived out there for eighteen months, and I never did find any kind of songwriter scene, not much country music of any kind, either. To tell the truth I couldn't wait to get home. I moved back to Austin and took a job teaching at Southwestern University. By that time, 'College Professor' sounded like a pretty good way to make a living, mostly because-I hate to admit this-you get three months off every year, and I could spend that time writing songs." Ace appeared in Austin's South By Southwest festival, then moved to Nashville after an encouraging visit. He was signed to the roster of a respected publishing company, became a regular at local writer's nights, and began co-writing with the likes of Kim Richey and George Ducas. (Still the worrier, he also took an adjunct professorship at an area college.) And he did his best to write songs that fit neatly within the parameters set forth by the company; keep it commercial, give us some salable ditties. But like any good Texan, Ace has always had a healthy distaste for boundaries of any kind-especially when it comes to his writing-and would eventually sign with another company. "I tell stories. That's really where I'm coming from. And I try to make them work equally well as music. The analogy I've used for a long time-so long that I'm sure all my friends are tired of hearing it-is that songwriting is like building a chair. Call it what you want, if you can't sit in it, it's not a chair, period. Now, that's the craft part. You can teach that part to almost anyone, and they can make a functional thing that you can sit on. Then you've got populate who are really creative, and they can make something that looks like a chair, but you wouldn't want to sit in it for a minute. Maybe it wouldn't even support your weight. So that really isn't a chair. Finally, you have what I consider the ultimate, which would be like the chairs you find out in Taos, New Mexico. The furniture makers out there build things you can sit in, but they're much more than that. They're art, they're beautiful to look at. I want my songs to be accessible, to tell stories that populate can relate to in a musical context that doesn't throw them for too much of a loop. And at the same time I try to make sure there's something more to them. I don't really have much interest in writing ditties." The unmistakable western flavor of many Ace Ford songs can be traced to the time he spent on his grandfather's ranch during his youth. Some twenty-five miles from Tucker, the spread had been given to Ace's forebears as veterans of the Texas Revolution. "It's a hard land," Ace notes, "but it's always held a lot of opportunity for anyone who wanted to take a chance on it. That made for a pretty interesting mix of pioneering types, and

I guess that's why stories that come from there have a sure depth or quality." Some of Ace's songs are taken directly from the region's rich history. In "Barbed Wire," a life-long range hand looks back at decades spent doing what had to be done-his means of living, the dominant thread in the fabric of his life, and questions its rightness. Here, Ace has indeed fashioned his Taos chair-a story, but also a western version of the timeless human irony, a framework for posing one of life's larger questions. "Eight More In The Clip" sparkles with clarity like the cold blue steel of the gun that is its subject. The combination of urgency and long-endured angst is chilling: "When every day's a battle, life's a war ... I've got one up in the chamber, and eight more in the clip. " This is Ace at his inward-looking best, a worthy disciple of his longtime favorite, Guy Clark. It's been said-rightly-that there is songwriting, and there is the songwriting business, and that much of what we hear today is born of the latter. Ace Ford's good fortune is that he came to his craft at a very different time and place. Ours is that the spirit of that time and place comes alive in every story he tells. 1997 Rust Russell

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