

Mp3 Brian Meece - Folk: Folk Pop



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Singer/ Songwriter stuff that's hip. Think John Denver if he was cooler and produced by Dr. Dre. 10 MP3 Songs FOLK: Folk Pop, POP: British Pop Details: Brian Meece was busted for surfing too close to the pier at Jacksonville Beach as news cameras rolled and his friends got away. Strike one ... He also ran through a complete cycle, from obscurity to fame and back, after releasing his own movie -- or, as Meece himself puts it, "from hero to zero in just six weeks." Strike two ... But then came his debut album, Brian Meece, a self-produced collection of original songs, with lyrics wistful and elusive, melodies that stretch and play, and a voice that seems born to tell stories in song. Home run. Brian Meece is more than just an album. It's a snapshot of a young artist whose travels left him neither bitter nor defeated. Instead, these performances -- gently humorous, reflective, intimate, jazz-inflected but flavored as well by hints of grunge and even hip-hop -- suggest that Meece has learned the ways of the world without too much damage but with more than a little insight gained along the way. Beyond that, Brian Meece is about chasing adventures, from small-town Germany to a seat behind a sound board on an Alaskan cruise, then coming back home. The thread begins on the Mississippi Gulf coast, where Brian was born. He knew his father, his grandfather, and even his great-grandfather, all of whom were singers rooted in country gospel. With presentiments of O Brother planted in his head, he was suddenly transported in third grade to Germany, where his father had been hired to do computer work. "Going to Europe definitely influenced me," Brian admits. "Bands like Mr. Mister were all over the radio -- very slick, but fun and melodic. I had just seen Back to the Future, so of course I got a skateboard and a guitar, and right away I started to play." He returned with his family to the States and began high school in Pensacola. By this time Brian had discovered the Ramones, Nirvana, the Violent Femmes ... as well as Donovan, Nick Drake, and Elliot Smith. "All of those guys did music that was simple, direct, and from the heart," he

explains. For a while he tried to put these influences into play with a series of punk bands -- an experiment that didn't quite work out. "No matter how hard I tried, I didn't sound anything like the guys I loved," he laughs. "I'd walk away from each audition, shaking my head, and pop in my Lemonheads record on the way home." Looking for other avenues into music, Brian enrolled at the Recording Workshop, a recording technology school in Chillicothe, Ohio. The subject suited him. "I had access to recording studios whenever I wanted," he says. "I was obsessed with learning everything about recording. It was like a dream come true." After recording school, Brian picked up a gig doing sound work on a Carnival Cruise Lines ship bound for Alaska. Back in the Lower 48, he spent some time driving across America, filling his journal with sketches that would grow into songs. For a while he moved back in with his family, then won admission to the University of North Florida, his school of choice "mainly because the surf was better in Jacksonville than in Pensacola. There's a pier right there at Jacksonville Beach, where the surf is really good. It's illegal to surf there because we'd scare the fish away from the fishermen, but everyone ignored that until the Marine Patrol decided to make a point by arresting one of the surfers." Guess who got busted. "There was a huge media blitz as they took me to jail," Brian remembers. "They handcuffed me and confiscated my surfboard. I ended up missing a couple of exams, failing a couple of classes, and dropping out." Good thing, too. Forced to fend for himself, Brian started a yard business, Two Guys That Mow, with his brother. "We made good money, because with the humidity in Florida, lawns were always growing," Brian says. "But more important to me, this was my first experience as an entrepreneur. Right away, I really liked the idea of rowing my own boat." Inspired by the kick of being his own boss, Brian, with his friend Michael Twigg, launched a film company, Spin Pictures, when he was just 24. Their first picture, *The Spin*, drew decent crowds when locally released in Pensacola; their follow-up, *Sharkman*, made an even bigger impression. "We had tons of press," Brian recalls. "When United Artists faxed a contract to test-screen it for us at some of their theaters, that was huge. I remember thinking, 'Wow, no more day jobs for me!' Well, two weeks later, they pulled the plug on *Sharkman*, and it became damaged goods." Once again living with Mom and Dad, driving around town in a 15-year-old pickup, Brian began to realize that even throughout his cinematic adventure, music had been what he really always wanted to do. Reviews of *The Spin* and *Sharkman* tended to dwell on how great the soundtracks were. And customers at the surf shop where he worked kept asking him to take out his guitar and sing some of his tunes. Eventually, an Earth-to-Brian epiphany led him into the studio to lay down a few tracks.

As the tape rolled, the feeling grew that something special was happening. He had some older material, including one song, "You and Only You," that dates from high school. Most of his songs were more recent reflections on love lost and found, conveyed in words that are sometimes upbeat ("We'll go and search for treasure. Life ain't but a cup, so come on, drink it up, y'all," from "Playground"), sometimes wounded ("Can you shoot me down? Load and aim again ... I'm asking as a friend," sung to a disarmingly delicate accompaniment on "Shoot Me Down"), always intriguing. Brian's music perfectly complements this meticulous poetry. An acoustic, intimate feel predominates, dressed by bits of flute, cello, or hand drums, though Brian's punk roots surface on electric tracks ("Your Lucky Day"), while occasional drum loops nod and retro keyboard sounds nod toward his interest in old-school hip-hop. On balance, Brian Meece is a bouquet of delicate and exuberant blooms that somehow find harmony. Naturally, Brian is releasing this debut on his own label, Paperplane. "I don't want a major label deal," he insists. "My goal is to do with Paperplane what Ani DiFranco did with Righteous Babe Records, but I want to take it one step further by getting it heard on the radio. A couple of artists are keeping it real on the radio -- Norah Jones, Dave Mathews, Weezer -- and I'd like to be one of them. It's fly-or-die time, and I'm actually very excited about seeing what happens now." It is, in other words, another step on a journey that's been rich with wonder so far and promises only more of the same in the years to come. This game is just beginning ...

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