

Mp3 Jon Riley - Down In The Threads



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A suburban kid sits in his room trying to sound like Bob Dylan - fails - instead just writes about what he sees and knows. Portions of the filthy lucre goes to Aids relief in Africa. 13 MP3 Songs FOLK: Modern Folk, ROCK: Folk Rock Details: Everything about Jon Riley suggests he's a Christian artist. His liner notes quote "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing", a hymn by John Wyeth. His web site features an exhortation for visitors to show Christ's love in action by donating money to combat AIDS in Africa. His lyrics are full of lots of ambiguous "you"s -- the kind that bands use when they could be referring to either a girl or Jesus. However, it's important to note one huge difference between Riley and any of the myriad of evangelical Christians armed with guitars and Bibles. Rather than sticking Riley with the "Christian artist" label, Down In The Threads suggests that he is, in fact, the rarest of things: a singer-songwriter who legitimately means it when he says he's just an artist who happens to be Christian. Yes, his songs may or may not be about Christian themes (the title track, for example, features the lines "I will find my grace / Beneath the break / Of a crimson flow", while the album frequently namechecks, or at least implies, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit), but it never comes across as being overt or forced. Riley is clearly writing about what he knows, and he understands that religious songs are much more interesting when applied to what sixteenth-century Spanish mystic Juan de la Cruz called "the long, dark nights of the soul" (see "All Around Me" for proof). Similarly, the ambiguously titled "Dad I'm Sorry", which could be literally described as God-fearing, makes for a much more compelling listen than any number of obnoxiously happy tunes. Thankfully, Riley also applies his songwriting ability to more earthly matters. "Constance" and "Hope Nearby" are beautiful love songs (though, on reflection, both titles suggest something deeper), while "Baroque" is Riley's attempt at simple storytelling (he succeeds admirably). Each song is musically simple, with very little background stuff to drown out Riley and his electric guitar --

but when tunes are as lyrics-focused as these, that's a good thing. That's not to say that Riley has given no thought to his music. Indeed, his tunes are consistently solid and listenable; even if you don't like the message behind many of the songs, they're still musically redeeming. It's tempting, based on the strength of Down In The Threads, to say that Riley is kind of like a Christian version of Bob Dylan. Then again, Dylan presented a Christian version of himself about 25 years ago, so the comparison comes up short. Riley will have to be content with being himself, then -- but if Down In The Threads is any indication, that should be more than enough for any listener. -- Matthew Pollesel Splendid Magazine

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