

Mp3 Stephen Clair - Altoona Hotel



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"Turbo Folk." -- San Antonio Express 11 MP3 Songs FOLK: Modern Folk, ROCK: Roots Rock Details: Stephen Clair grew up in northern NY State. A lot of people don't realize there's a whole state up there. You say NY, and most folks think of a city. But Stephen, he spent his formative years splitting logs for firewood; then he'd put the logs in a wheelbarrow and haul it up to the house where he'd throw the logs down a chute into the basement. After that, he'd go downstairs and stack the logs. Then he'd do it again. This went on for years. The house he grew up in was in the middle of a big field next to a wide creek, which his cousin insisted was a river. Once, Stephen took two 100-ft. extension cords end-to-end out into the field as far as they'd go and plugged in his guitar amplifier. He sat down under a tree and got to work. Eventually he moved to NY - the city, that is - where people buy their firewood at the grocery store. There were a lot of familiar things when he arrived in the city, like the folk scene on this side of Broadway, and the antifolk scene on that side of Broadway. He had been coming to the city for years, always playing on one side of Broadway or the other. Both sides had their merits, their histories. But Stephen played guitar like he might have been hanging out at CBGB in 1975. And he sang like a far away sailor whose boat had run aground in West Texas. He was from neither this side nor that side of Broadway. So, he moved to Brooklyn. Brooklyn had trees and sky going for it. It was newly familiar because it was a city, but at the same time he could walk around the neighborhood and smell wood fires burning. It felt a little old and new, which is how Stephen was feeling. He had learned a lot of chords as a teenager. Took music theory for years, spent hours every day moving his fingers all over the neck of the guitar. Out of the blue he heard that Woody Guthrie had said if you use any more than three chords you're just showing off. "Oh great," thought Stephen. "He's right." Then, Stephen spent the next ten years forgetting all those miscellaneous chords and smartypants strumming patterns. It turns out, he had just as much to say with

his mouth as he did with his guitar.

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