

# Mp3 Jack Grace Band - The Martini Cowboy



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Timeless weirdo country/rock that makes drinking and thinking fun. This music has celebrates the glorifful side of the down and out. 16 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Outlaw Country, ROCK: American Underground

Details: CD review: The Jack Grace Band - The Martini Cowboy Theyve been sort of the opening act du jour on the country circuit, opening for Merle and Willie Nelson and Jerry Lee, et al.. If this is an attempt to get some notice from the retro country crowd, it ought to work. Hell, this ought to get them on the Grand Old Opry, if they dont mind songs about cocaine at the Ryman Auditorium The Jack Grace Bands last album I Like It Wrong put in some serious overtime on some of the better jukeboxes across the counry. In fact, you could say that it was the party album of the summer of 2004, Suffused in booze and tested live on crowds of drunks in dives all over town, those songs were every smart party animals alternative to Jimmy Buffett. It may therefore come as some surprise that the new album by the Jack Grace Band is an attempt to - gasp - make a serious record. I say record because the cd is divided into a distinct side 1 and side 2. A concept album, no less, complete with little instrumental fragments separating the songs, and something of a central, unifying theme. The most surprising thing about it is that it actually works. Tight, focused, thoughtfully conceived, in other words, everything Graces previous work was NOT. Which ironically was always his saving grace - the band may have been a little loose, the whiskey may have run rivers but you always knew that if you went to see these guys live you would have a good time. While it doesnt look like anybody left the bar for very long to make this album, its a hundred eighty degrees from what you might expect after hearing the last one. Is it possible that Grace has actually matured? The Martini Cowboy is packed with haunting, gorgeously oldfashioned, 1960s style country songs with tasteful electric guitar, soaring pedal steel, piano and a rhythm section that swings like the dickens. You can dance to this stuff more than you can Graces older stuff. Because ultimately thats why honkytonks exist:

where else can you squeeze your cheatin lover against the jukebox and sway to the strains of Merle Haggard? Who happens to be exactly who the first song, the albums title track, evokes. Straight up. When hes on top of his game Jack Graces songs sound like country classics from 40 or 50 years ago. The cds second song Broken Man continues in a purist vein, driven by Jon Drydens beautiful, incisively minimal honkytonk piano Im not gonna go out there tonight, swears the Martini Cowboy. Hes been burned too many times. Which leads perfectly into the next song, Cry, a sexy bossa beat and groovalicious bass player Daria Graces bop-bop backing vocals only momentarily distracting from its eerie minor-key drive and bitter lyrics. When after a surprisingly jaunty, jazzy guitar solo the thing stumbles out of its groove and literally falls apart, the effect is nothing short of heartbreaking. The albums next track Trying to Get Away from Nothing at All zooms in on our protagonist trying to pull himself away from the brink. Its a showcase for Graces voice, a big, Johnny Cash style baritone that can handle the over-the-top whiskey-drinking anthems and the dark, disturbing ballads with equal aplomb. After that song, we get Sugarbear, another minor-key Waits-esque number with ambient steel guitar, and Rotary Phone, arguably the albums best song , a haunting, skeletal minor-key blues: Let me tell a story about the way it used to be/With a rotary phone dont leave a message for me/Youre gonna be an old man too The last song of the A side, What I Drink and Who I Meet at the Track (Is My Business) is completely self-explanatory - its one of those songs that someone should have written long ago, and that it took this long before someone did is a mystery. Its a good thing that it was this guy who wrote it and not Neil Sedaka. I mean, can you imagine Neil Sedaka at the track? No, you cant. Hed get killed before he got to the stands. The B side begins with Uncle Luther. By now, the Martini Cowboy has fallen in love. His Uncle Luther is moving back to the shack he hasnt lived in for ten years and the Martini Cowboy has to get out. But thats not whats bugging him. Its that he cant stop thinking about her. Yeah, her, and it scares the hell out of him. The following tune, Verge of Happiness is so George Jones its not funny, in fact its scary, right down to the vocals. Nobody ever did desperate, lost love songs better than Jones, anyway, so it makes sense. Happy in the Fall continues in the No Show Jones vein Im happy in the fall, but I dont like the landing, Grace muses ruefully as the band swings behind him. The albums climactic track, Something to Look Forward To - where the guy finally gets the girl - is a bit of a letdown. Like at the end of Siddhartha when the guy finally gets to India and all he finds isOMMMMM (hey, this is a serious album, Im trying to be serious about this).The cd concludes with a real old-timey number called Spike Down, which sounds

like an electrified version of some obscure 19th century folk blues. There's not a weak song on this album - which is more impressive than you think. Hell, even Sergeant Pepper had that stupid, phony raga tune that Harrison sang. And Merle Haggard's greatest hits albums all seem to have those horrid pro-Vietnam War ditties he wrote before he woke up and smelled the coffee. So the Martini Cowboys in pretty good company. If this doesn't get him the big record deal (memo to the band - WATCH YOUR BACK), Jack Grace can always fall back on his side project Van Hayride, which plays country covers of Van Halen songs. I'm not making this up. Not a word. People who are interested in Tom Waits Johnny Cash Neil Young should consider this download.

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