

# Mp3 Walter Ehresman - Handwedge From The Trap



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Various contemplations on corruption, the death of imagination, Area 51, and having to stand in damn long lines. Rockers, Spanish guitar, seditious folk, a lilting East African ballad, a western tear-jerker, an Arabic dirge, and two spoken word pieces. 11 MP3 Songs in this album (72:14) ! Related styles: FOLK: Political, WORLD: World Fusion People who are interested in Bob Dylan Jimmy Page John Prine should consider this download. Details: This is the 6th solo album from Walter Ehresman, founder/leader/multi-instrumentalist for the Austin band Snipe Hunt (with CDs also available on CDBaby), and it's probably his most contemplative solo effort. Once you get past the exuberant, raw rock and roll of the opening track, things quiet down considerably. The world music and roots elements come more to the fore, with two electronically and lyrically dangerous spoken work pieces at the end to mix things up a little. As is usually the case, Ehresman handles all the vocals and plays all the instruments (except for a guest drummer on "Ain't No Use"), along with handling the production of the album. Track #1, "Saying No To the Question Unasked," was written after an experience Ehresman had one Monday morning at his day job. "As I was walking across the parking lot towards the building," Ehresman says, "a guy pulled up in his soccer mom white minivan, slowly emerged, and started shuffling in to work with his head down and shaking side to side, saying "no, no, no, no...." to no one in particular. Ehresman continues: "Not that I'm that fired up about going to work on Monday mornings either, but this seemed like something more fundamental than that.....a deep fear and loathing (to borrow a phrase from HST) for any new experience that the day might bring.....I had already been noticing this trend in the population at large, along with a commensurate drop-off in creativity and/or appreciation of the same, and the song came together from all this." The unusual combination of dirty electric guitar, fretless bass, electric mandolin, piano, and electronic percussion pads creates a riotous and decidedly rocking opener for the album, and this is one

of the best of all Ehresman's solo recordings. The song is a staple of the Snipe Hunt live set list, where some say it's what Lou Reed would sound like if forced to play mandolin at gunpoint (or would that be "needlepoint".....?). Track #2, "Kismet? (cante hondo)," is an unusual instrumental track with influences from several different styles, none of which had shown much prevalence in Ehresman's previous work. After an abrupt ascending chord from the MIDI guitar, the song takes off in a dynamic flamenco direction with nylon string guitar and 8-string electric bass featured, backed up by fretless bass, electric guitar, and steel string acoustic guitar. The fretless bass provides the link into an extended classical guitar section, with layer upon layer of nylon string guitar parts added to construct a very stately and formal atmosphere. This segues into an acoustic flamenco section, which itself leads into an outro that restates the theme of the intro section. A very unexpected song from Ehresman, displaying a wide range of emotions and moods. It was inspired, he says, by a flight of fancy regarding a beautiful girl he saw (but never spoke to) in a small airport in Colorado. Track #3, "I Know How the Anarchist Feels," may come off as insensitive in our post-9/11 world, but one must remember that the song was written five years before that tragic incident. According to Ehresman, "at various times in my life I've seen references, in books, movies and plays, to the so-called "mad bombers" of the early 20th century.....They are often portrayed as a caricature of a swarthy Eastern European, in a trench coat with a cartoon-like spherical bomb (complete with burning fuse), skulking around dirty alleys in big cities with fedora down low.....muttering about 'revolution.'.....I sought to look deeper into what could motivate these men, some of whom presumably had families and friends whom they loved and led what appeared to be normal lives.....It would seem that a motivation could have been the wide-spread corruption in the various level of government in America at the time, with the mega-rich robber barons (Hearst, Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie, etc.) enjoying unimaginable wealth, privilege and influence that was as far away from the lives of ordinary citizens as we are from Mars." The deep corruption that Ehresman sees in power systems in the world today created a link in the lyrics to that time. "Of course, I do not and have never advocated the use of terrorism for any purpose, political or otherwise. That was never at issue in writing the song. Rather, it was my effort to understand the psychological state that could bring men to that point of action. The powerlessness of living in a seemingly-unassailable corrupt system brought them to a tortured mindset where morals and ethics became twisted in ways so eloquently described in Dostoevski's Crime and Punishment. The song explores how anyone could be drawn to the concept called 'anarchy.' I don't live in that mindset myself

and never will, but I can understand how it can happen, and I think that understanding is valuable in trying to prevent future violent acts." The song's instrumentation has a certain timeless quality to it, with acoustic guitar, mandolin and 6-string banjo backed up rhythmically by a tuba part, supporting the shifting time-periods covered in the song. The final verse is worth quoting here: "When the power's entrenched and you choke on the stench of the vipers who act so genteel/and an army of one can't get anything done if he lacks that financial appeal/and your screams of outrage are not heard on the stage as you twitch on the catherine wheel/and the backroom toodoo is not open to you, now you know how the anarchist feels."

Track #4, "Asleep at the Switch of Life," is another of Ehresman's worldbeat songs. Influenced by the guitar traditions of East Africa, the song is a gentle call to the listener to wake up his perceptions, both in his immediate space and in the world at large. Such a life, the song hopes, would then be both more rewarding and less selfishly-oriented. Two electric guitar parts, one flatpicked and one fingerpicked, interweave throughout the song as a talking drum provides the rhythmic low tones along with subtle African percussion and MIDI guitar kalimba and bass parts. Ehresman provides his own African choir via use of a vocal processor. Track #5, "I've Been In This Line," is a funny little ditty, done in an "old-timey" string band style, about life and death waiting in a long damn line. We've all been there..... Track #6, "Shadow of a Love," is a tear-jerker ballad with lyrics that should cause this song to be covered by major artists from a variety of genres (something I bet you never thought you'd hear about an Ehresman song....). 6 and 12-string acoustic guitars mix with bass and string parts to provide a sympathetic setting for this song of regret and lost love. "This was not written about any relationship of my own," Ehresman says. "This is another of the many songs that I dreamed, believe it or not.....I'll just wake up in the middle of the night with the lyrics and melody in my head, and I've got to get myself to get out of the damn bed, grab the guitar, and write it down before I forget it. Since I can't read or write music, I've then got to record it in the next few days or the song will just fade away. I've forgotten many songs that way." Be sure to check out the fine remake of this song on the 2002 Snipe Hunt album, "I Saw the Future (But the Damn Train Hit Me Just the Same)," where the vocals and vocal arrangement by Vic Ramirez really make the song shine. Track #7, Khamsin, seeks to create a timeless Arabic dirge, with the narrative character calling for an apocalypse to sweep away the sins of the world so that the effort at human sentience can start over again. "Khamsin" literally translates in Arabic to "50," but the term is used in that language to refer to a mythic great wind that is said to blow in from the desert every 50 years, washing away the evils

of Man. A wide variety of percussion instruments (including a Brazilian surdo drum) are used to create a very primal rhythm, with acoustic guitar providing the drones. The call of the muezzin can be heard in the background of the bazaar, along with the sound of the wind on the sands. Track #8, "Ain't No Use," is the only song on the album to include a musician other than Ehresman. Donald "Shark" Smith, whom Ehresman played with in his first band back in 1979 in San Antonio, plays trap kit here with the subtlety he's known for. Though bleak in its tone and subject matter (with a sound reminiscent of Bob Dylan's "Time Out of Mind" album), this is probably one of Ehresman's most effective songs. The acoustic fingerpicked and flatpicked guitars work well with the hide-and-seek mandolin, and the understated fretless bass part sounds very much like a doghouse bass. World-weariness drips from Ehresman's vocals, enhanced by a vintage reverb sound. Track #9, "Things Never Done," is a remake of a song Ehresman wrote and recorded for his '90 solo release "In the Path of the Cat Chasers." Walt always wanted to do the song more justice sonically, which is achieved here through the digital recording (this was the first piece recorded following his purchase of a digital multi-track recorder). Lyrically, the song laments the downside of being a gentleman in matters of the heart, though never questioning the necessity of taking that high road. Tracks #10 and #11 are something new for Ehresman--spoken word pieces. Having been exposed to the recordings of William S. Burroughs, the influence can be strongly felt on these tracks. According to Ehresman, "the text for these rants was written in a very stream-of-consciousness way.....these are very much creations of the moment, and I resisted the temptation to refine them later on.....What you hear is what came out in one session each at the computer." In each case, the narration is done through a vocal processor, so that on one track Ehresman sounds female, and on the other track like a small child. The musical backing tracks use a variety of instruments, from bongos and theremin on one track to the Yamaha electronic drum kit (left temporarily over at Ehresman's studio by ex-Snipe drummer Tom Corwin) on the other. That kit is highly unusual, allowing the bass part to be played with the kick drum, the piano part with the cymbals, and a sequencer to be started and stopped with the floor tom, all in one real-time performance in the studio. These two pieces were released in '97 on an album called "The Rants." Ehresman has since written several more rants, and has long-term plans to release an updated version of "The Rants" with several more "My Little Spleens" on it. The bonus track is vile and inappropriate and should not be listened to by anyone. Ehresman's claims that it was just his way of coping with all the women obsessed with Andrea Bocelli

does not excuse anything. Though many serious and "darker" themes are explored on this release, there is humor here too. Overall, the impression is one of great thought being given to the lyrical content, and great care and experimentation given to the music. All the songs were recorded digitally, and were digitally remastered by Bad Kurtis D at Million Dollar Sound in Austin in '03. \_\_\_\_ PRESS: Local Flavor, 1999: "Most of Walter's music ends up somewhere between Pink Floyd and Frank Zappa....this, however, is largely a songwriter recording. Richly textured lyrics shine with brilliance right through the dark, bleak, frustrated observations and social commentary.....'I Know How the Anarchist Feels' positively aches! And, since Walter never does just one thing at a time, some of that toooo groovy worldbeat/experimental mostly instrumental stuff is here, too.....(the CD) ends with two segments of Walter's long and fascinating spoken- word rants.....There seems to be no way to adequately describe Walter's recordings in just a few words...But if the people in Hollywood who place music in movies ever learn of the marvelous compositions of Walter Ehresman, I won't need to wrestle with my dictionary any more."

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