



Sound Advice

Highlights of 2004

01/07/05

The AP spotlights sterling yet overlooked albums of 2004:

Todd Snider

East Nashville Skyline

Oh Boy Records

1.06.05

Far beyond the bright lights and shining stars of Nashville's country music culture, you'll find Todd Snider gazing back from the East Nashville Skyline with a sound purer than any rhinestone cowboys. Reminiscent of Bob Dylan's foray into country music called *Nashville Skyline*, Snider's album, *East Nashville Skyline* is a collection of stories — some his own — modeled in the tradition of hard-living country renegades such as Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard. And just as those greats found humor in the absurdly tragic — Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues" put a humorous spin on the emotions of an imprisoned man awaiting execution — Snider does the same as a wordsmith. He talks of getting in a drunken fight and arrested on "Tillamook County Jail," and at the end of the night wanting nothing more than a telephone call, two Tylenol, and someone to come pay his bail. "Iron Mike's Main Mans' Last Request" describes what it would be like for the guy who carries the boom box in Mike Tyson's entourage to ask the fighter for \$300. It's bar humor Snider knows well.

But like Cash and Haggard, Snider moves on a single album from songs as entertaining as Iron Mike's boom box flunky to others about personal, and often political matters. "Conservative Christian, Right-Wing Republican America" has Snider comparing himself to right-wing America. (By the way, the album was released before the election.) The differences are in black and white for Snider, the proclaimed "tree-huggin', pot-smokin', porn watchin' " folk singer who's nothing like the "soul savin', flag wavin', Rush lovin', land pavin' " subjects of his songs.

— Ryan Lenz, *Associated Press*