

Todd Snider — “*East Nashville Skyline*”

Oh Boy — 4 stars (out of 4)

Todd Snider

Mark Earnest (more stories by author)

RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL

7/22/2004 05:37 pm

As I picked this up to review, I mused on the opinion that Todd Snider has the longevity curse: He’s released consistent albums with at least two or three brilliant songs for more than a decade, but has never received proper acclaim — and it’s possible that he never will.

And whaddya know: The first song on this new CD, his best since his debut, touches on that topic. “Age Like Wine” finds him sardonically questioning why he’s even singing and playing anymore as he gets older. This type of perceptive writing just shows how Snider still deserves a larger audience, and the whole CD proves that in spades.



Snider’s gift is taking the worn-out and putting a twist on it. He writes a “stuck in jail” song, a liberal vs. conservative tune and one about a suicide jumper but gives each its own distinct spin that’s free from cliché (his choice of Fred Eaglesmith’s “Alcohol and Pills” is also apt, a basic but strong tune about the perils of wasted fame).

The lyrics are where he truly shines. “Iron Mike’s Main Man’s Last Request” is an incisive song about celebrity hangers-on. “Sunshine” is that suicide song rendered poetically with a surprising ending. “The Ballad of the Kingsmen” is a slice of rock history that also covers current political topics, sung in a kind of talking blues-rap style. It’s wholly original and one of the year’s best songs (when I heard it on the radio the other day I broke into a wide smile).

Here’s hoping Snider really gets that elusive, huge following with this one — unlikely since it’s on a small indie label and not his former major-label home. Then again, there would have been a boardroom freakout if he turned this one in to his corporate masters.

Go see Snider today and tomorrow at the Nevada Museum of Art, playing on the roof (What a great idea, NMA. Do it again sometime).

Recommended If You Like: Steve Earle’s “I Feel Alright,” late ’70s Neil Young, Lyle Lovett