

Mp3 Susan Howe - Lonesome Water

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Rhapsodic, bittersweet, spiritual, poignant; like Joni Mitchell in prison allowed conjugal visits with her haunted prosecutor. 11 MP3 Songs FOLK: like Joni, ROCK: Americana Details: Hi Susan, Well, Denver turned out to be a blast. Had a great time. Lots of great beer, and made many contacts....For the hotel I brought along a recording of the 15 Shostakovich string concertos and "Lonesome Water." But my CD player wasn't working, so I couldn't listen to anything. I found myself walking around Denver muttering "This is not good. This is very bad." and other lines from your CD. I had to pop it in the player as soon as I got home. The music works that way on you. I was relieved when I finally heard it. - J.

----- Susan Howe, Lonesome Water (Grenville Records) "This trouble you're in has brought you to The Landing / I know you won't stay but you'll need a companion", 'The Landing.' Appleton, Wisconsin is known for its famous escape artists - Harry Houdini, Edna Ferber, and Willem Dafoe all did time here - but in a better world, Appleton should also be known for the quality of its misfit toys and beautiful losers, for everyone who pulled a stool up to the bar and stayed at home. Susan Howe's new record, Lonesome Water, gives voice to Appleton's loners, drunks, divorcees, and undone lovers, portraying them with a splendor and compassion that transforms their sorrows from the mundane to the poetic. Like James Joyce's Dubliners, Lonesome Water evokes the dangers of small town paralysis; like Joyce's Dublin, Susan Howe's world is highly particular and yet universally applicable, irreparably flawed, yet charged with beauty. Susan's heartbreaking soprano voice and her subtly incisive songwriting turn the dross of daily life into the precious metal of poetry, evoking Wisconsin characters like Terry McGovern, the daughter of Minnesota Senator George McGovern and longtime Madison resident, who left a Madison bar one night in 1994, lay down in the snow, and died. A sad and true story of depression, alcohol, and Northern winters, but Susan's Teresa Jane isn't alone in the snow - she has a companion as she passes away, Mary, who sings "I'll take you up gently / I'll take you up swiftly / I'll fold you up into my arms" as Terry ebbs away. Most listeners are probably going to identify this Mary as the religious one, but I think Susan means her to be entirely secular, a drinking companion and, more importantly, a friend. So many of these songs, particularly 'Lisuyara Ornadell,' 'The

Landing,'and 'Teresa Jane,' gesture towards this redemptive power of friendship. Susan's idea for the album may be very different from what I've just said. She probably wants you to know that this is very much a record about a quest for - something. A something that eludes her, a something that she glimpses out of the corner of her eye, a something that she may find if she can cross the tightrope, take those few scary steps without help (a revolution?), and fall into the arms of the man waiting on the other end (Jubilee)? The best thing I ever learned in grad school was the difference between transcendence and immanence: a transcendent view of life means you think there's something outside of this world, something utterly unknown to us or known only by faith. An immanent world view means that this world is all we've got; there's no outside to our world. It's just us. Susan means for this record (I think) to gesture towards something transcendent ('Daddy I am coming home'), but what I hear is a record filled with the consolations of the immanent: our friends, these songs, and this world. Friends can't save your life, but they can save you a bar stool; the 'gap at the bar' has your name on it; and 'The Landing' is how and where we help one another. - CH

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