



The Clown Juice EP

March 16, 2005

Somewhere between the surreal memories of life in the 90s and that timeless country sound that now only exists on oldies stations and in my mind lies Peter Cooper. With a nod toward Don Williams and a foot firmly planted in the irony of our more recent musical past, Cooper writes music as if he were witness to things most of us ignore.

The five song EP, *The Clown Juice EP*, relies heavily on Cooper's ability to tell a story but couples nicely with analog production of simple arrangements. The album was recorded at Eric McConnell's studio in Nashville--the studio of choice for Loretta Lynn, Will Kimbrough, Adrienne Young, and Todd Snider. The songs are laced with a simple acoustic guitar and the legendary Lloyd Green's steel guitar and little more. The play between these two instruments, Eric Brace's harmony vocals and Cooper's easy-going singing leaves room for the album to focus on the stories.

It is Cooper's knack for packing a little novella into a three-minute song that will keep them coming back. All five tracks were written by Cooper with some help from Baker Maulsby on "Nirvana Was Better Than Pearl Jam" and "Thompson Street." "Gospel Song" kicks things off with a little rolling barroom fun that shows off Peter's lyrical mastery. "Andalusia" really kicks up Green's steel playing and keeps the travelling song between the lines. The aforementioned "Nirvana" will be a huge flashback for those of us who survived grunge. It mocks the folks that just weren't Nirvana and even squeezes in Peter's best Eddy Vedder impression. By the time you get to "What's the Use" it feels like you've been listening to Cooper your whole life. Laid back and expressive of a feeling we've all had, the song laments making an effort when perhaps an effort was a mistake. The last song on the EP however steals the show. "Thompson Street" cements Cooper as a real songsmith by painting the scene that most small town people have lived. Listening to the song I was back in Rosedale, Indiana--population 600 on a busy day. Despite these five short songs, the album succeeds at providing a full meal for the price of a snack due to Cooper's exacting pen.

For those of you care, that is indeed East Nashville so you know that Peter must be good.

By Todd Smith