

TALENT ON DISPLAY

Joe Ross

Radney Foster's third album on the Dualtone label continues in the finest tradition of the Texas music mystique that incorporates elements of country, rock, R&B, and folk. A songwriting craftsman, Foster probably has a vision of touching both young and old audiences with his vigorous and eclectic music. He also seems to display a loose and laid-back manner with his contemplative Texas hill country music, as well as his more raucous honky-tonkin,. I wonder if he's really as much of a free spirit as his lyrics seem to indicate.

Produced by Darrell Brown and engineered by Niko Bolas, the recording sessions depended on the assistance of friends Waddy Wachtel (electric guitar), Charley Drayton (drums), Rami Jaffe (Hammond organ, keys), and Bob Glaub (bass). Various guests add background vocals, as well as electric guitar, strings, and additional percussion. Striving for a more live, old-school feeling, the songs were arranged right in the Van Nuys studio, and the rootsy tracks were cut in two days. Simplicity with expert musicians is an ideal thing for music like this.

Foster owes his own influences to a wide range of predecessors like Buck Owens to The Beatles, Burt Bacharach to Guy Clark. But, in finest Texas troubadour tradition, Foster has found a niche of his own that illustrates that a wise marriage of country music with other influences can result in a fashionable, trendy product without severely compromising a genre's origins or precedent. With both memorable melodies and poignant messages, *This World We Live In* thrills listeners. Songs like "Drunk on Love," "Kindness of Strangers," "Never Gonna Fly," "Prove Me Right," "New Zip Code" and "Half of my Mistakes" are immediately appealing and all pack a punch. While I would have enjoyed hearing a little pedal steel and more fiddle in the mix, Radney Foster's songs still have plenty of spunk, wisdom, and sentiment to yield bountiful rewards.