



Steven Fromholz "Live At Anderson Fair" Felicity Records

Nanci Griffith cut a live album at this Houston venue back in August 1988. Thirteen years later, Steven Fromholz, one of the generation of Austin musicians that preceded, and inspired, Nanci gets his turn for a *spin* on the Fair's *red brick floor*. According to Steven's liner notes, Tim Leatherwood, the proprietor of Anderson Fair Retail Restaurant recorded this Saturday night set without his knowledge, and presented Fromholz with a set of the discs at the end of the evening. Impressed by the results, Steven decided to unleash it on the listening public, making it the third *live* release of his career. Anyone familiar with Texas musicians will know that Fromholz, a relentlessly self-deprecating performer onstage, easily qualifies as the clown prince of Texas music, yet he is also the composer of many fine songs. The latter includes "Texas Trilogy" a work that, in my opinion, captured the essence of Texas life in the mid twentieth century. I'd even go as far as to say that, thirty years on, it is still the best Texas song ever written.

Circa the late sixties, Fromholz launched his recording career with the duo FrummoX, when he was based in Colorado. His performing partner back then was Dan McCrimmon, and they titled their album "**Here To There.**" Fromholz, in his usual gruff tone, would describe the foregoing event as having taken place in "*19 and you mind your own business*" or alternatively "*19 and I don't care to recall.*" From the FrummoX album "The Man With The Big Hat" as well as the aforementioned "Texas Trilogy" resurface here, as Steven works his way through his thirty year plus song catalogue. Fromholz brings things bang up to date with "Fairest Of Fairweather Friends," "So Far No Good" and "If I Couldn't Get To The River" from his Y2K studio album "**A Guest In Your Heart.**"

Lately – well, for the last handful of years - Fromholz [like Butch Hancock] has been a guide/singer with Far Flung Adventures based out of Terlingua, Texas, and "If I Couldn't Get To The River" was inspired by the river trips he undertakes. All three Fromholz live albums have included a "*medley of my hit,*" aka "I'd Have To Be Crazy," which Willie Nelson took to the # 11 spot in the Country Charts during May 1976. As is the penchant of numerous Texas performers these days, Steven performs a Townes Van Zandt song, in this instance "No Lonesome Tune." The only other cover in his set is Pat Garvey's "The Lovin' Of The Game" which Fromholz first cut with The Almost Brothers on his "**Everybody's Goin' On The Road**" [1991] cassette.

Truth to tell there are no new Fromholz songs on this collection since, paraphrasing the man, the album was made "*unbeknownst to me.*" As it stands, this disc probably serves best as a career wide primer for newcomers to Fromholz's unique musical vision of Texas. For long time fans, it's Fromholz in his favourite place – onstage entertaining the folks. In that regard his amusing between song patter has been left intact and links the nineteen songs performed.

Folkwax Rating 6 out of 10

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