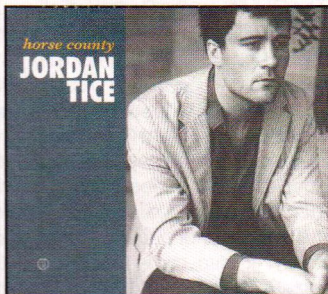


JORDAN TICE HORSE COUNTY

Patuxent Music
CD-286



Jordan Tice has built quite an extensive recorded legacy given his relative youth. Thus far his reputation has been as a flatpicking guitarist, either via solo records or as part of small bands. He currently performs in a trio with fiddler Brittany Haas and bassist Paul Kowert.

His latest release, *Horse County*, is a significant evolutionary change-of-pace, as the lion's share of the album's 11 tracks feature him in the role of a singer and songwriter. It's a daring step, given the consistently high quality of his instrumental work. Original melodies such as "A Cool Dog," on which Haas and Kowert accompany him to create an elegant new acoustic sound, or the title track, a peppier number on which he's joined by Mike Witcher on resonator guitar, mandolinist Dominick Leslie, and Shad Cobb on fiddle, definitely play to his strengths as a composer, arranger, and picker. Noam Pikelny also contributes his fine banjo work to the proceedings.

So how does the new singer/songwriter role suit Tice? As a vocalist he does a solid job, with his understated delivery supported by some occasional harmonies from Haas, Kowert, and guest Chris Eldridge. His lyrics are clever and a bit unconventional, and his melodies reflect his advanced musical imagination. Ironically, one

disconcerting tendency he has is to squeeze an excess of words into his lyrics, preventing his melodies from breathing as much as they might otherwise—a form of musical busy-ness to which he's certainly not prone to as a guitarist. On the CD's sole collaboration, "Live On The River 'Til I Die," which he co-wrote with Maya deVitty of The Stray Birds, there is significantly more space which gives the song's chorus an extra charge of power and emotion.

Tice deserves credit for stretching his boundaries, including a nice finger-picking solo performance on "Horse County Rag." There's no reason to think that the combination of more songwriting experience and his innate musicality won't bring him up to a level of his compositional heroes. (Patuxent Music, P.O. Box 572, Rockville, MD 20848, www.pxrec.com.)HK