

# Folk-rock singer Darden Smith incorporates his storytelling skill on new album



ERIC EVANS

*Snapper Music Columnist*

In the tradition of John Cougar Mellencamp and John Hiatt, and at times John Bon Jovi or Bruce Springsteen — singer/songwriter Darden Smith writes songs chronicling everyday events and emotions. On his new album, "Trouble No More," he exercises that storytelling skill on rock songs with heart.

"Love Just Left Town" is a song about the people swallowed up by their environment, primarily those in the city, "lost beneath the concrete," to quote Darden Smith. Co-written with British artist Bo Hewerdine, it is an acoustic train trip through

Middle America.

The lyrics from "All I Want (Is Everything)" came from a London pub. According to Smith, "This woman, drunk, started screaming... 'I need some violence, I need some love...' I got out my pen and wrote down the first and part of the second verse."

The song is a funny but honest indictment of American desire and lifestyle.

Whether performing his own work, or that of others, Smith imbues his performances with an unpolished twang that adds a "down home" quality, similar to "I'm on fire" by Springsteen or "Jack and Diane" by Mellencamp.

In the same vein as "Jack and Diane" is "Frankie and Sue", a song from Smith's second album "Trouble No More."

The two are alike in that each is a modest tale of love between two people. The primary differences lie in tempo and feel: Smith's "Frankie and Sue" is a quicker, more upbeat tune with a similar message and a happier ending.

The storytelling in Smith's work is a product of his childhood in Texas. "I come from a heritage of people who can't tell the truth and, uh, it's ingrained in you from an early age on to never let the facts get in the way of a good story, and so that carried over into my songs," Smith said.

Soundalike of the week: Londonbeat. Is this the Fine Young Cannibals under a different name? The lead singer is either Roland Gift (of FYC) or a blatant imitator. The music — synth bass plus drum track with rhythm guitars and that vocal — is a dead-ringer for any of the hits on "Raw and the Cooked." The song is catchy, but wholly unoriginal.

For Frank Zappa fans (all five or six of you) there is cause for celebration. The most noteworthy tunes he played during his 1988 "Broadway the Hardway" Tour were unexpected covers. Two of those covers, Ravel's "Bolero" and Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven," will appear on domestic CD single in April, but will now appear on import CD single.

Both promise to shock. Also, volume four (of a projected ten) in the "You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore" set will be arriving to stores in April. Another two disc set, it is over 100 minutes of live Zappa rarities.

Elvis Costello has a new album coming out in April. Although untitled at this time, it contains two songs co-written with Paul McCartney, and two ska songs.

The release of Crowded House's third album has now been pushed back to June, so Neil and Tim Finn, Paul Hester, and Nick Seymour can put finishing touches on the final mix.

Seymour is doing the cover art again. The addition of Tim Finn to the group should add a spark. Perhaps this record will be more upbeat than 1988's "Temple of Low Men." As a novelty, check out the CD single of Crowded House's "I Feel Possessed." It contains three Byrds' songs co-performed live with former Byrds' vocalist and songwriter Roger McGuinn.