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Music

## McGarvey delivers quirky, powerful pop

The little Indian headdress packed in with this CD matches the one on the album's cover subject, and that was a real surprise. Even more surprising are the cocktail drums that McGarvey plays. I've played them, and it's a different type of percussion experience, one that allows the drummer to stand while playing. The "singer/songwriter/drummer genre is born" slogan notwithstanding, this is a nifty album of quirky, sometimes powerful pop that could wind up on my Top 10 List at year's end.

McGarvey played drums for a number of New York City-area bands, including The Vipers and The Liquor Giants, but his tenure as lead singer with Valentine Smith is his real claim to fame. That band released three albums and shared stages with The Wallflowers, the Lemonheads and



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NRBQ, among others. This album is McGarvey's first solo effort and will be released April 22.

Here he has made a more intimate record, playing cocktail drums and guitars on all tracks, as well as enlisting the support of The Good Thieves as backing band. These folks, Thomas Novembre and Eric DePiccioto (guitars), bassist William Paris and former Valentine Smither Kimberly N. Curtis on violin and

flute, occasionally supplemented by others, form quite a group. The resulting album, recorded on a combination of 4- and 8-track cassette recorders and ProTools software, is a gem.

The album brims with catchy choruses, jangling guitars and memorable hooks, like the folksy opener, "Stay," (an excellent tune with a tired title) with its alt-country chorus, Andy Burton's shimmering keyboards and Curtis' angelic harmonies, and the witty subway tale of a lovely rider who was "Standing Next To Gloria Steinem." The title track, which contains all of the above and then some, is another perfect example of McGarvey's talented blend of wordplay and instrumentation. The album has many rocking moments, too, such as "5 O'Clock Hero."

The aforementioned subway tune is extremely catchy,



sarcastic and funny; it's easily one of the best tunes about a feminist icon in my memory. Another great metaphor lives in "Jericho Smile," which is one of the album's harder-hitting tunes, musically. The "hits" just keep on coming on this album. It's altogether unfortunate that in today's rigidly formatted radio world they probably won't get much airplay outside of college radio.

Be advised to hang on after the last great song, "I Hear Voices," and wait for the bonus track. It is the album's most Beatle-esque tune, "Sorrow," a country-tinged piece of melancholy driven by

Curtis' violin. In a perfect world, it would be a crossover pop-country hit.

Make no mistake, this is not the down-tuned, distorted stuff of many "rock" play lists. This is jangling, hook-filled stuff, truly enjoyable.

Ask for it at local stores, or shop online at [www.billmcgarvey.com](http://www.billmcgarvey.com).

*Ricky Flake is a former punk rocker, working musician (he's drummer and vocalist with the band ConspiraSea) and longtime music fan who lives in Biloxi.*