

ALAN GACKETT

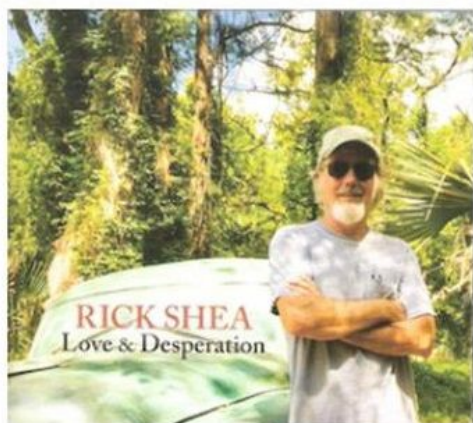
AMERICANA, ROOTS, COUNTRY & BLUEGRASS MUSIC

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Rick Shea - Love & Desperation

Tres Pescadores Records TPCD-12

Veteran Southern California country singer, songwriter and guitarist Rick Shea revives honky-tonk roots and blue-collar sensibilities with songs rooted in real experiences and true to hard-working lives and aspiration that evoke little snippets of nostalgic memories of the likes of Moe Bandy, Merle Haggard, Buck Owens and even some of the cosmic country-rock bands of the 1970s such as the Burritos and the Pure Prairie League. An evocative singer with a haunting voice, he offers a distinctive blend of sentimental and rootsy blues-meets-country soul that is flavored with the spices of the Mexican music he grew up with in San Bernardino. An accomplished multi-instrumentalist, he cut his teeth in the bars and honky-tonks on the West Coast, later building a career as a singer, guitarist and songwriter. In addition to his solo work, he's been a much in-demand musician on other artists' recordings and tours. He has played with Los Lobos, Rosie Flores, Chris Gaffney, Wanda Jackson, Katy Moffatt and R.E.M. among many others. As a member of Dave Alvin's 'Guilty Men' band for seven years, he toured all over the world and played on most of Dave's albums during that time.



This guy's a master songwriter ... his muse is an earth-bound one—full of scruffy moments and care-worn emotional truths. **His vocals are characterised by a compelling blend of unshakable conviction and vulnerability to life's inevitable losses: the singer-songwriter's paradoxical sensitivity expressed through**

a well-studied craft. Top-flight West Coast musicians including Shawn Nourse (drums), Jeff Turmes (bass, sax), Phil Parlapiano (accordion, organ), Skip Edwards (keyboards), David Jackson (accordion) and long-time collaborator Dave Hall (bass, harmony vocals) join Rick who plays electric lead, acoustic and steel guitar and mandolin. The music feels lived-in, sweated over, and experienced, not written-by-committee and focus-group-tested and then heartlessly performed. Every note here rings true with the pure love and joy of making music.

Rick opens with the only cover tune, Cajun rocker Al Ferriers' *Blues Stop Knockin' At My Door*, a toe-tapping acoustic rockabilly-ish delight with **Parlapiano's accordion trading licks with Rick's twangy electric playing. The blues theme continues with the self-penned *Blues At Midnight* with a steady, mournful accordion wending its way beneath sombre, guitar picking in an arrangement that is straight-up last call at the bar, where tears of regret get swept up in the smoky haze of confusion and betrayal. It's a stunner. (*Down At the Bar At*) *Gypsy Sally's* is a dark yarn with a sly swing that elicits visions of a sawdust floor and neon lights setting the scene for an evening of questionable choices.**

Throughout he demonstrates sharp songwriting skills and paints vivid characters and images with his lyrics and breathes life into them with his wonderfully expressive voice. *She Sang of the Earth* chronicles the tale of a desperate romance between a run-down bar singer and the stranger who wandered in one night only to see it all fade into a fondly remembered memory. The tempo is upped for the Tex-Mex flavoured *Juanita (Why Are You So Mean)* which, despite the break-up lyrics, will have you tapping your feet enthusiastically whilst grinning from ear to ear. It's back to the blues for the plodding *Nashville Blues* as he ruefully reflects the benefits of having stayed out on the Coast, rather than making the pilgrimage to Music City where musical dreams are more likely to be shattered. He showcases his guitar prowess on the dreamy instrumental *Mystic Canyon* and gets all romantic with the captivating *A Tenderhearted Love*. Spare guitar and effective weeping steel guitar accompany the deeply personal lyrics with a message from the heart that's delicate to the touch but delivers a hefty emotional punch.

This is an album full of honest truths in styles that range from country to zydeco in blended forms and filtered by the rock sounds that impacted so many musicians of his generation. While Rick Shea's song craft and musical arrangements are befitting a bygone era, in no way does this album sound dated, as he presents a distinct cosmic country music equally suited to the back roads of Texas or the hallways of a haunted European mansion.

www.trespescadores.com

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