

HEARTWORN HIGHWAYS



It's Christmas Eve, 1975, and 19-year old Steve Earle is seated at a weather-worn dinner table, surrounded by emptied jugs of wine, spent cigarette butts, and a guitar-wielding pack of honky-tonk misfits that includes Guy Clark, Rodney Crowell, and Steve Young.

Long hair hanging over his eyes, the fresh-faced Earle leans over and launches into the sweet, backcountry chords of "Mercenary Song." The room is nearly silent as he plays, save for the occasional clink of wine-filled glasses. Then, slowly, voices around the table rise up at the chorus into a rusty campfire harmony, united in smoke, drink, and song.

After HackTone's David Gorman watched this scene unfold, he ejected the DVD, grabbed a bottle of whiskey, hopped in the car, and landed himself on label co-founder Michael Nieves' couch. "We gotta watch this thing," he said. "There's never been a soundtrack. There needs to be. It's our next release."

They didn't move until the closing credits.

We pride ourselves on scouring the musical underground for tunes we didn't know we couldn't live without, and *Heartworn Highways* is one of HackTone's deepest cuts, meticulously culled from the eponymous 1976 outlaw Americana documentary featuring the aforementioned musicians as young bucks forging an honest path in a time when country music was just starting to evolve an oily sheen.

Michael and David worked with the filmmakers to sift through hours of gutbucket performances from these legends-in-training, winding up with a wholly original chronicle of the down-home resilience and earthy song making that conjures those proverbial shivers.

Heartworn Highways is your seat at that dinner table, listening in as these troubadours pour earnest confessions through strings and voice. In particular, Guy Clark's naked performances dominate the collection, his plaintive heartache searing through "LA Freeway" and landing right in your lap on the classic "Desperadoes Waiting for a Train," in a stripped-bare version that drills straight to the well of tears at the song's core.

Equally moving is the bleak, dusty balladry of Townes Van Zandt on "Waiting Around To Die," performed in his wood-paneled kitchen for an audience of two—his girlfriend and his blacksmith neighbor. "It's the first song I ever wrote, by the way," Van Zandt explains before launching into the haunting tune, which eventually leads his neighbor to tears.

Then there's the growling back-porch groove of Larry Jon Wilson's "Ohoopie River Bottomland;" the sweet, lost ballad "One For the One" by John Hiatt (recorded the day he landed his first record deal); the barroom kick of Gamble Rogers' "Black Label Blues;" and Rodney Crowell's first-ever turn at the mic on "Bluebird Wine," a song in whose shadow modern country music can only hope to have a foot.

Featuring the very first recordings of Earle, Hiatt, and Crowell, and stirring whiskey-soaked performances by Clark, Van Zandt, Young, David Allan Coe, and others, *Heartworn Highways* raises the spirit of true roots music, representing a slice of Americana musical history and a generous tip of the ol' cowboy hat to its pioneers.



Select press for *Heartworn Highways*:

★★★★ ½ “stunning throughout” --*All Music Guide*

★★★★ “Intoxicating...revelatory.” --*MOJO*

★★★★★ “It’s relevance to the latter-day Americana boom can’t be overstated.” --*Uncut*

★★★★ “Intimate, breathing, vigorous, funny, sad and triumphant.” --*American Songwriter*

★★★ ½ (out of 4) “Seek this out not only for its unique performances, but also for its unusual warmth and exceptional intimacy.” --*The Austin Chronicle*

A- “Helps explain how these artists reclaimed American roots music.” --*The Onion*

“Makes listeners feel like they’re in a rough-and-tumble bar in the emerging Austin and Nashville alt-country scenes.” --*Guitar Player*

About HackTone Records:

HackTone Records is a new independent label that began with the idea of rescuing unjustly neglected albums and artists from record-bin obscurity.

HackTone’s vision has since expanded and the label showcases music that’s truly a cut above; albums whose appeal has grown much stronger than their original labels ever fathomed or whose artists have built an almost evangelical fan base through the sheer quality of their work.

The HackTone philosophy is grounded in the modern music business, with a renegade eye towards innovation. Their core staff consists of just a few dedicated music freaks that hire the best people in the business to promote their albums, and the label’s release schedule is planned to give each disc a lotta love ‘n attention. Buyers are justly rewarded when they score a HackTone gem; each album is treated with lavish packaging that enhances the listening experience, defying the naysayers who squawk that the CD is dead.

HackTone was founded by a pair of create diggers who believe that there’s no such thing as “good music whose time has passed,” and the new distribution deal with Rhino represents a return to the fold. Before launching design and marketing firm HackMart, co-founder David Gorman was Rhino’s “Creative Czar,” winning an Art Direction Grammy for the *Beg, Scream & Shout: The Big ‘Ol Box Of ‘60s Soul* collection in 1998. Co-founder Michael Nieves served as head of Rhino’s music licensing and publishing departments before founding licensing company Sugarool!