

WHY WHITEY MATTERS

BY REBECCA KRAUS

Whitey McFearsun is a musical vision that stomps on expectations, blends together genres and reminds us that sights and sounds should not be synonymous. Music in its most compelling form is a blend of categories, drawing from the past and paying homage to influences while still placing a personal stamp on each song. And

Whitey succeeds in challenging his audience to not only listen, but also look at the persona of its creator. That persona comes in the form of a black man who wears his hair slicked back, big sunglasses, tight silver

pants and a slinky shirt. Whitey McFearsun knows he's sexy, yet the color of his skin makes him taboo. He may look like a rock and roll star, but he is also an outcast - repulsive and grotesque. Whitey is not so much the alter ego of Shawn Amos, but a metaphor of himself that is poised to make a statement.

The statement is one you're bound to get. You don't have to be a black kid in a white world to feel out of place. You don't have to be a parent to feel sorrow. And all you have to do is be human to feel love. Whitey McFearsun knows this too. Just as angst has been one of the cornerstones of rock and roll, Whitey

“Whitey McFearsun is the physical manifestation of all the tensions, anxieties and contradictions that go on inside of me, and all the different love affairs I have with black culture and white culture and pop culture.”

Shawn Amos

reflects the new transition in rock...with a twist. Aside from the personal lyrics, you'll find a muted jazz trumpet or an optimistic mandolin. You'll also hear rollicking guitar licks and the deep dark wail of a man wise beyond his years.

On some songs an accordion spells out the melody. Inner voices have more than one timbre; sometimes they rage, sometimes they trickle. Sometimes a harmonica can tell the story. Whitey McFearsun likes contradictions. Because expectations should be challenged. And all those emotions matter.

Rebecca Kraus is a freelance writer living in Venice, California. Former Music Editor for Entertainment Today, she has contributed to PREMIERE, Who Weekly, Mr. Showbiz On-Line, Home Theater, Swing, and Ethnicity. She writes about music, movies, culture and most recently, her adventures in India. Rebecca remembers voting for Shawn for 7th grade class president because he passed out free Famous Amos cookies