

disc of the week



Xavier Rudd *Dark Shades Of Blue* Salt-X Records/Anti Records

Brooding, sinister and meandering at points but optimistic and light at others, *Dark Shades Of Blue* is a wonderfully layered and eclectic release featuring instrumentation unlike anything coming out of this hemisphere. Australian roots rocker Xavier Rudd has crafted a strange and varied album of enthralling alternative rock songs wrapped in a thick coating of world music. The

disc has a heavy rocking, almost wicked, core to it that's beautifully complemented with nontraditional sounds, like background didgeridoo or subtle voices singing in little spoken indigenous tongues. This potent mix of ancient and modern is simultaneously distant and familiar, making this entire record a real accomplishment.

Rudd's activist-minded songwriting, whether reflecting

on a broad topic like the environment or a narrower political issue like the plight of the Aborigines, is given an additional level of credibility by keeping the production simple. There is a variety of sounds represented here but they're largely manmade and this grassroots approach to music making is particularly effective in keeping Rudd's message from becoming muddled. A higher budgeted, more electronically altered sound could easily have created disconnect between the music and the message.

Whether its acoustic guitar, sitar, or bongos, the multi-instrumental Rudd doesn't shy away from much and while he may not have played all of those instruments, his ability to effectively combine such a wide range of instruments is impressive. Rudd shows some serious musical capabilities as *Dark Shades Of Blue* transitions seamlessly between accessible guitar riff-driven rock songs, emotional ballads and dissonant experimental pieces.

**In A Word: Sophisticated
Grade: A**

—by Michael O'Leary