

Waterloo Region Record (Kitchener, ON)

Date **21.08.2008**

Circ. **67000**

Page **N6**

~~XAVIER RUDD~~ - DARK SHADES OF BLUE (UNIVERSAL)

~~XAVIER RUDD~~ used to be known as a multi-instrumentalist tree-hugger best known for his didgeridoo skills.

On his new album, the Canadian-Australian decides to focus on flexing his skills on the Weissenborn slide guitar, a sound most commonly associated with Ben Harper these days — a comparison that's hard to avoid when listening to *Dark Shades of Blue*.

His sound is bolstered by the addition of K-W drummer Dave Tolley (Nine Mile), who lays down solid and yet sparse rock and reggae grooves for Rudd to solo over.

Rudd has billed this as a "dark" album — which it is for a guy who goes barefoot most of the time and who can charitably be called a hippie without much argument. But it's also his most accomplished — and, frankly, listenable — album to date.

Here, he's free of some of the more cloyingly obvious feel-good gaia political lyrics of his previous work, not to mention toning down the stoner surfer vibe. With Tolley's help, he also manages a much more successful melding of rock and reggae forms than one would expect.

The didgeridoos are still there, as are the aboriginal backing vocals, and Rudd's own vocals are pitch perfect. The songs succeed more as grooves and moods, but there's plenty here to appreciate, even for skeptics.