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## XAVIER RUDD KEEPS STYLE, ALTERS MOOD ON 'DARK SHADES' CD

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BY MATT CAMERON

Australian multi-instrumentalist Xavier Rudd has defined his career in much the same way that many adult alternative artists have--with earnest yet optimistic guitar jams that are remarkably easy on the ears.

After following this formula for six years, however, Rudd apparently decided to take a different approach with his fifth studio album, "Dark Shades of Blue."

As the title suggests, it is darker and less cheerful than his previous offerings. But it provides a brilliant contrast to his 2007 recording, "White Moth."

In fact, what's best about "Dark Shades" is precisely the fact that it reveals a new side of Rudd's musical ability. Many musicians who have reached the level of success that Rudd has (particularly in his native Australia) would be content to keep churning out album after album of the same sort of material.

While Rudd doesn't radically change his musical style on "Dark Shades," the mood is different enough to alter the listening experience considerably. When you get down to it, Rudd is still just jamming on his guitar, banjo and didgeridoo--but here, he does it in such a way that his music evokes a different and more compelling atmosphere.

The album's strongest area is its middle section, which segues perfectly from Rudd's deft didgeridoo-playing on "This World as We Know It" into the evocative guitar on "Shiver," and then into the brooding sounds of "Uncle." Songs like "Uncle" and the psychedelic-sounding "Hope You'll Stay" offer just enough of a contrast with typical Rudd sounds on "Edge of the Moon" and "Home" to validate the album's atmospheric shift.

In fact, even "Home," the instrumentation for which could easily have fit in on any of Rudd's



Aussie phenom Xavier Rudd brings a new tinge of darkness to the didgeridoo-driven songs on his recently released fifth album.

previous recordings, has a melancholy message of yearning that Rudd is able to convey with the combination of his acoustic guitar and his wailing voice. Ultimately it sums up the entire album well, as it is more of a departure from Rudd's typical mood than from his accustomed musical style.

Matt Cameron is a senior at James Monroe High School.

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What: Xavier Rudd performs Australian adult alternative with opener Griffin House. Where: 9:30 Club, 815 V. St. N.W., Washington When: Sunday, 7 p.m. Cost: \$20 Info: 202/265-0930 Web: 930.com

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