

"Lines of Darkness, Lines of Light" Press Release

"The best CD anyone has given me this year."

- Eliza Gilkyson

The list of Austin musicians who are native to the River City is perhaps a relatively short one. But 27 year-old Michael Shay was born and raised here, and the incredible diversity of music that has surrounded him throughout his life is evident in the rich blend of styles that can be heard on this new release of eleven lush, largely acoustic songs from one of Austin's native sons.

Lines of Darkness, Lines of Light is an exploration of Michael Shay's talents as a singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and producer. After years of being known primarily for his cello playing (most recently with Libby Kirkpatrick and with Alive and Well, a duo with Two High String Band lead guitarist Geoff Union), this **self-produced**, self-recorded solo debut marks Shay's natural progression from the role of accompanist to that of bandleader and front-man.

On this album, his **cello-playing** is found only on the two "book-end" tracks. The opening cut and title track "Libra (Lines of Darkness, Lines of Light)" utilizes a quartet of cellos that effortlessly weaves around **Libby Kirkpatrick's** playful harmonies. The song also features a bass flute duet played by Austin jazz master **Alex Coke**, and steel drums played by Aaron Lack that top off a truly refreshing ensemble. The final tune on the disc, "Willow's Tune" (the only song not penned by Shay, but by his songwriting mentor Jim Harris) brings the cello back in a reminder of Michael's **roots in classical music**. An aching, elegant piano and cello accompaniment (both played by Shay) provides the perfect backdrop for a powerful and yearning vocal duet with **Anais Mitchell**.

In between these two songs, the album follows a consistently refreshing, natural course through Shay's unique musical universe. From the funky "Waterloo" (Austin's original moniker), to the bluegrass tune "Won't Get Lost" (with **Billy Bright, Bryn Davies, and Geoff Union** of the **Two High String Band** and vocals by **Idgy Vaughn**), the album's multiple styles are tethered neatly together by the organic sound of beautifully recorded acoustic instruments and by Shay's rich, distinctive baritone voice. The hard hitting (and politically timely) "Independence Day" is followed by an upbeat swing tune, "Pretty Women" featuring gypsy-swing guitarist Raphael Bas and violinist Eleanor Whitmore (Slaid Cleaves, Susan Gibson).

With jazz drummer Jeremy Brown, and Shay on upright bass, mandola, guitars, piano and pump organ, the rest of the songs on Lines of Darkness, Lines of Light are a collage of ballads, Texas-flavored folk tunes and rockers - all of them meditations on the theme of the sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory elements of this life we call our own.