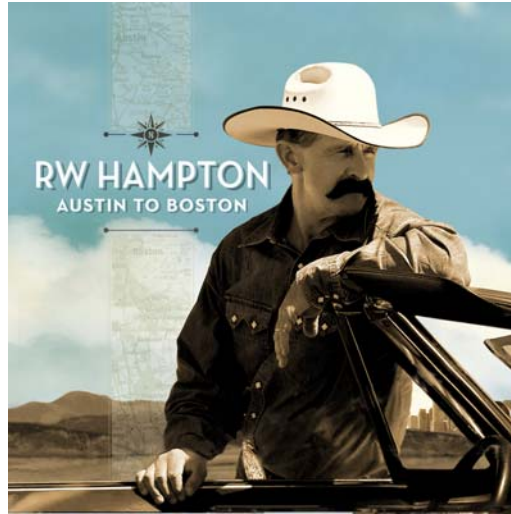




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R.W. HAMPTON – AUSTIN TO BOSTON

Stewart's XMAS CD Round-up

by Stewart Fenwick

Western music doesn't get the profile it used to, yet there is still a vibrant scene out in America's heartland. **RW HAMPTON** is one of the guys still keeping the sound alive. "Austin To Boston" (Cimarron Sounds) is his latest album, just released here. It's actually his 12th album, so he is by no means a new artist. Then, Chris LeDoux had over 20 albums out before Garth Brooks mentioned him in a song, and he suddenly became an overnight success. Perhaps Garth needs to do a new song, or we just need to check this album out to discover what a talent RW is. The lead off European focus track, "Cowboy's Prayer" was No. 1 in the Hotdisc chart for 3 weeks, based on reactions from DJ's and journalists on this side of the Atlantic, so he is catching the ear of the media. He has a superb authentic, heartfelt voice, that blends nicely with simple musical arrangements. There is a lot of ground between Austin and Boston, and RW covers a lot of ground on this album. He was involved in writing three of the tracks. Whilst "Lady" and "Rodeo Man" are quite slow ballads, "Shortgrass," which closes the album, is quite a bouncy number and one of my favourite tracks on the album. The swing feel to western music lends itself nicely to Michael Buble's "Home" and Eddy Arnold's "You Don't Know Me," but the two tracks that really show the album's diversity are a beautiful version of "Danny Boy," (complete with bagpipes and tin whistle), and a really catchy swing version of Freddie Mercury's "Crazy Little Thing Called Love." It certainly doesn't sound out of place. Western music is still alive, and as long as guys like RW Hampton are producing it, there'll always be a market. www.rwhampton.com