

Folkie Johnsmith still pickin' and kickin'

KICKIN' THIS STONE (Blue Pine Music) Johnsmith

Johnsmith is a fine acoustic guitar picker and singer from Wisconsin known for his endearing songs and ballads. His fiery licks and finely crafted melodies delight audiences during solo shows.

"Kickin' This Stone" (on Blue Pine Music, available at www.johnsmithmusic.com), his sixth CD, is a 12-song, countrified folk endeavor, with a full

CD REVIEW radio sound including a half-dozen musicians that differs from his earlier efforts.

You can see Johnsmith on Sept. 18 and 19 at the Boston Folk Festival (www.wumb.org/folkfest).

One thing that hasn't changed is that Johnsmith is a wordsmith. He's an astute observer, and nowhere is that truer than in "Friend of the Coyote," his half-spoken tribute to the late folk singer Dave Carter:

"His songs were a mouthful of blackberries oozin' down your chin / Full of ripe and sweet as August sin."

Johnsmith gives a nod to his Irish roots, blending an Irish reel with whistles, bodhran, accordion and violin in "Thomas Francis," the story of an immigrant who began his life anew in America.

The title track uses the image of kicking a stone as a metaphor for life. Other songs, like the pulsating "Drive" and the passionate and tender "Iris Blue," deal with issues of the heart, the pain of love and the need for conflict resolution. He sings of the majesty and intertwining



STEPHEN IDE/The Patriot Ledger

Wisconsin singer-songwriter Johnsmith's CD, "Kickin' This Stone," contains a fine mix of endearing ballads with a country-folk flavor. Johnsmith will perform at the Boston Folk Festival next month.

of lives with trees, the unfairness of judging people in "Don't Put Me in a Box" and cleverly sings of his randy Darwinistic needs in "Monkey in Me."

While I craved a bit more of Johnsmith's solo guitar work on this

CD, I was not disappointed. Co-produced with Lloyd Maines, the CD is punctuated by Maines' dobro and pedal steel, Darrell Scott on bouzouki and baritone guitar and his daughter Elisi Smith on harmony vocals. "Kickin' This Stone"

delivers mostly original songs (he adds a warm rendition of Greg Brown's "Early") that are rich and memorable.

—STEPHEN A. IDE
The Patriot Ledger