

'TEXAS' Reviews  
Audrey Auld Mezera

**FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS #68**

Real Music Played For Real People By Real DJs in March 2005  
#2 Audrey Auld Mezera: Texas (Reckless)

**EURO AMERICANA CHART May 2005**

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*"...thank you for sending "Texas" and to tell you about the great responses I've had to playing it, particularly the song "There's a Hole in My Life". The listeners love it!"*

L. Rosendahl KRCL

*"Again you crafted a beautiful album that we gladly will give airplay!"*

T. Oldenberg, Alt Country Cooking

*"I can't wait to share this great music and my enthusiasm with my listeners."*

M. Andrieu, NSEO 95.2 FM, France

*"a truly wonderful album, possibly one of the best things in the "Americana" field I found recently."*

M. Ferro, Radio Voce Spazio, Italy

*"I absolutely love Texas. It is a wonderful album full of some of the best music and songs I have ever heard. You have managed to capture how music is meant to sound. Well done! You should be very proud of such a fine album."*

T. Barry, Coffs Harbour Radio, Aust.

*"it's so beautiful - i love the new record."*

C. Gregory, MilesOfMusic.com

*"There's a hole in my life" from your album is getting quite a reaction. Congratulations on your songwriting these days. Your new album is great."*

H. Kay Radio 2MCR, Sydney

*"I am digging this cd. Love the Harlen track, yes Ball and Chain does hit home to us married folk... Hole In My Life is an excellent song. I love when you write songs like these. You always seem to include a track like this in every project. Billy Joe is a classic tune in my book... love it."*

Twangcast. Com

*"Thank you so very much for the excellent promo CD you recently sent of "Texas". I will be spotlighting the album during one of my upcoming shows. Once again, thanks for the CD and for keeping the music alive..."*

Johnny Timewarp, WFCS 107.7 FM

*"The new album is really good. Good Job!!!"*

Sleepy John, KPIG

*"I love this music. Great job young Aussie gal!"*

R. Kimball KCBX

*"when I played "Hole In My Life" on KPFT this morning, I got calls wanting to know who it was! Phones went wild!"*

Christi, KPTFT

*"It's a keeper"*

KUT Folkways

**NO DEPRESSION**

If Audrey Auld Mezera weren't Tasmanian, she'd be Texan. 'Texas' - produced by Gabe Rhodes (son of Kimmie) and featuring members of Jimmy La Fave's band - is her tribute to the music of that land, and to the Austinites who welcomed her like family.

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Mezera's soulful country voice and narrative songsmithing would suggest she grew up listening to Dwight Yoakam and Loretta Lynn. In fact, though, her upbringing in Tasmania and Australia's outback was steeped in jazz and classical traditions. She toured the dark territory of Bauhaus and the Birthday Party before an art teacher turned her on to the country sounds that became her obsession.

A chance meeting with Australian roots-music patriarch Bill Chambers (father of Kasey) led to some records, and the founding of a label (Reckless) that now distributes Fred Eaglesmith and Mary Gauthier down under. Mezera's first two solo albums won critical acclaim in Australia and the US, not least for her cracked-earth vocals that gleam here and there like broken glass.

While those releases focused inward *'Texas'* mostly honors heroes - Woody Guthrie, Harlan Howard, Billy Joe Shaver, her father and her husband of two years, Daniel Mezera. She also visits a Texas anti-hero by covering Mary Gauthier's *'Karla Faye'*. The best cuts are an old-fashioned love song, the happy, loping *'Love You Like The Earth'* with Kimmie Rhodes singing harmony, and a duet with Chambers (and Carrie Rodriguez) titled *'One Eye'*, about the general goodness of getting by most days, wherever you may be.

**Linda Ray**

### **John Shelton Ivany Top 21 CD List**

Often when the great poets and troubadours of our past undertook a great creative effort they would write or sing praise to their deities, heroes or legends of the craft. Milton called to god, Byron to himself, countless others called to the Muses, and Audrey Auld Mezera invokes her heroes. In country music there is a legion of legends; among those only a few actually deserve their title. Mezera calls to Woody Guthrie on "Woody." She lauds the genius country-song craftsman Harlan Howard on "Song For Harlan", and "Billy Joe" praises songwriter Billy Joe Shaver.

The devotion of valuable creative space to Mezera's heroes pays off; the record is outstanding. "My Father" displays both the maturity that Mezera is gaining both in the pursuit of creative fertility and in personal relationships. This song pleads with a patriarchal figure to "never give up faith," among Gabe Rhodes' hauntingly spare harmonium. It is a treat of scant production and the power of minimalism. "Woody," an invocational song, conveys the closeness that country musicians feel toward that fascist fighting figure in the trainyards of the depression. Woody's songs of life capture the possible beauty of our human community. Truly, her statement *"Woody. I never knew you, but you're in my guitar when I play"* expresses the way in which his songs have touched us all.

Audrey Auld Mezera's third solo album is not the first album to ever be named *Texas*. Neo-traditionalist in aesthetic, she came to prominence partnering up with Bill Chambers, an Australian country music legend. She was raised in Tasmania by a jazz musician father. She came to country music through the scenic route of post-punk bands, such as Psychedelic Furs, but an artist introduced Mezera to the sounds of folk. This artist/teacher gave her the music of Dwight Yoakam, Emmylou Harris, Patsy Cline and Loretta Lynn. These influences sparked an obsession with the genre that endures in her even today. Her vocals recall her first solo album, *The Fallen*. There it was hard not to imagine all of the sadness world vector through one voice, and Mezera returns to that pain, singing yet another tale of loneliness, loss and hope. The odd aspect to her deluge is that the singer does not really blame anyone for the pain.

\*\*\*Political Album of The Week\*\*\*

**steve martinez-duhamell**

### **Country Standard Time**

Audrey Auld Mezera is the latest import from down under in alternative country's "Australian Invasion." Her immigration to the U.S. coincides with her American debut, which was recorded in Austin with the help of Gabe Rhodes (guitar), Carrie Rodriguez (fiddle) and Kasey Chambers' dad Bill Chambers (Dobro and lap steel). The resulting disc is one of the most satisfying debut recordings in recent memory.

Her songs are vivid character-driven stories of heartbreak and heroes. "Karla Faye" is a cover of a Mary Gauthier tune about the famed Texas woman on death row. Mezera's own compositions

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pay homage to the people who made her the woman she is today. "Woody" is an ultra-catchy tip of the hat to Woody Guthrie, and "Billy Joe" does justice to another American musical hero, Billy Joe Shaver. Meanwhile, "My Father" tells the tale of the influence Mezera received from her dad while growing up in Tasmania.

The success of the album can be attributed to Mezera's beguiling voice and straightforward delivery. Her singing has a pretty lilt to it not unlike Iris DeMent, particularly on the achingly beautiful "Hole in My Life." She can also adeptly traverse styles within the country genre including mimicking Hank Williams on "Ball and Chain" and the ethereal sound of Emmylou Harris on "Song for Harlan." Fans of Texas-style country served with a twist will be sure to love this recording.

### **Daily News, Qld. Aust**

If there's one thing to be said for Audrey Auld Mezera, when it comes to country, she certainly knows how to sing it in the finest traditional style. Now residing in the US, Audrey has come up with one of her best albums to date, *Texas*.

This is an album which will delight those lovers of the more traditional styles of country. Audrey has the ability to put plenty of emotion and inflection in her songs and she shines on this album.

With Audrey, you don't really expect to get anything else but country which has a strong connection to its roots and that's pretty much the case with the 11 tracks on *Texas*.

Most of the tracks are of a slower nature though the album does open with '*Love You Like The Earth*', which is getting plenty of airplay on CMC.

Lyricaly, the album is very strong with a number of the songs really throwing up some challenges. There's also a strong personal element on this album which does allow Audrey to really put plenty of herself in a number of songs such as '*My Father*', the soulful '*Song For Harlan*', '*Hole In My Life*' and '*Missin Mez*'.

There's some good variation as well with the honky tonk nature of '*Ball and Chain*', the gentle '*Woody*', the traditional qualities of '*Billy Joe*' and the slow swing rhythm of '*One Eye*'.

Audrey has a voice ideally suited to singing this type of country and she has some good friends to help out on this album. If you are looking for something which is true to the heritage of country and not some formulated production, Audrey Auld Mezera's *Texas* is definitely for you.

**Bob Anthony Jr.,**

### **LONE STAR MAMA [www.misslana.com](http://www.misslana.com)**

Having followed Australian singer/songwriter Audrey Auld for several years now, I highly anticipated the release of her latest CD "Texas". Now a resident of the United States, and married to the love of her life "Mez", Mrs. Mezera comes through with yet another high quality, diverse, wonderful CD.

Co-produced with Gabe Rhodes (son of folk artist Kimmie Rhodes, but a talent in his own right), this CD has quite the Texas feel to it, and will greatly appeal to Texas music fans if they are given the opportunity to hear it via Texas radio. Having attended the Fred Eaglesmith Texas Weekend in March 2005, where Mezera performed many of the new cuts to two audiences, I saw first hand how Texas music fans, as well as music fans from all over the globe, truly embraced her latest work. She says on her [website](#), "If I were American, I'd be Texan." Being a "dyed in the wool born here Texan", I'd have to agree.

"I Love You Like the Earth" is the first release from the disc. This is one of those love songs good enough to someday go "classic". The first time I heard it, I thought "damn, wish I knew someone getting married just so they could use this song!" It's bright, full of love and hope and happiness. It's rare that we hear a completely positive and upbeat song, this one is really nice for a change. And as much as I like it, it's not my favorite on the CD.

The only song not written by Audrey on the CD is "Karla Faye", written by Crit Harmon and Mary Gauthier. A sad tale of Karla Faye Tucker, executed in Texas after receiving the death penalty for murder, this song examines the controversy of crime vs. salvation and forgiveness vs. a

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sentence of death. Whether you are for or against the death penalty, it's a song that has the listener stop, think, and examine one's own feelings. Being a fan of Gauthier, I think Mezera does this song the justice (if you will) that it deserves.

"Ball and Chain" has a decidedly Hank Williams, Sr. feel to it, and seems to be a crowd favorite. This is one of the more "blue", yet fun songs, and will strongly appeal to the classic country music fan. The gist of the title indeed sets the tone for the song.

There are several songs on the CD that are either about or inspired by other music artists, including Harlan Howard, Woody Guthrie, and Billy Joe Shaver. My favorite song on this disc is "Billy Joe". A self-professed hardcore Billy Joe Shaver fan like me has a hard time hearing this song and not having tears escape from the eyes and roll down the cheeks. I've been privy to a copy of this song for many years, and I still get very emotional every time I hear it. It's a song of admiration for one of the greatest Texas singer/songwriters of all time. She sings:

"If you're a chunk of coal, I'm a grain of sand." Any Shaver fan knows immediately, she "gets" it.

All 11 of the songs in this CD are quality, and there are none that need be "skipped", something we don't always get to say about CDs. Mezera's vocals are as strong as ever, another high praise coming from a reviewer who isn't easily impressed with female artists as a general rule. She's chosen highly talented guests to appear on her CD. Besides Rhodes and his mother, Australian Bill Chambers, Darcie Deaville, Carrie Rodriguez, and both Will Landin & Wally Doggett from Jimmy LaFave's band all appear.

Do yourself a favor. Try to catch Audrey Auld Mezera LIVE, and be sure to request the song "One Eye" and the story she shares about it, you'll be in tears but laughing! Until you can catch a show, pick up this CD, grab a cold six-pack of the 65th Anniversary Special Lone Star longnecks, grab some chips and salsa, prop your feet up on the back porch, and enjoy "Texas".

**Dana Jones**

"If you've heard Audrey's previous records, for example "The Fallen" then you won't be disappointed when you listen to "Texas". The CD is very very good. And what else could you expect with such great guests and with a Audrey full of passion and feeling. The style is americana/alternative country at its best. There are no bad tracks here. But still some songs stand out, especially the starting track "*Love You Like The Earth*" and "*Hole In My Life*", "*Woody*", "*Missing Mez*" and "*Billy Joe*". "

**Christer Sjöblad, Sweden**

### **Weekend Australian**

"Texas is Audrey Auld Mezera's love letter to the state, using a voice and a songwriting sensibility that belie her Tasmanian origins. Starting as a tribute to the place that she might prefer to call home, Texas ends up being a document of personal and heartfelt tributes to her nearest and dearest, ranging from her immediate family to musicians and inspirations, such as Woody Guthrie and Billy Joe Shaver. Little is dressed up with metaphor or left to the imagination and by far the most starkly honest and gruelling is the junkie ballad Karla Fey. Exhausting. Auld Mezera's voice is complemented by some fine lap steel and dobro courtesy of Bill Chambers, and the immediacy of the recordings, done in one take, conveys the warmth of a group of musicians enjoying a little cloying sentimentality. Without sacrificing its crossover appeal, Texas is country music that even those without a penchant for gingham will enjoy."

**Tom Jellett,**

### **ROCKZILLA.NET**

When Lyle Lovett wrote "That's Right You're Not From Texas, but Texas wants you anyway", it's doubtful that he had Audrey Auld Mezera in mind. But, after hearing this album, it would be a harsh mind indeed that would argue that Texas does not want Audrey anyway.

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Audrey Auld Mezera (the Mezera is a recent addition, following her marriage to Wisconsin born, Northern California resident Dan "Mez" Mezera), is from Tasmania, which is the southernmost state of Australia, and a very long way from Texas, but this, her third solo release is redolent of the musical traditions of the Lone Star State. In the liner notes, Audrey writes, "If I were American, I'd be Texan" and on this recording she has whole-heartedly gathered the eclectic mix of dancehall dreaming, honky-tonk exuberance, and lonely laments that characterize the best Texan music in a joyful embrace.

Texas was jointly produced by Audrey and Gabe Rhodes and recorded in Gabe's studio at the hill-country home of his mother, Kimmie Rhodes. Rhodes also handles acoustic and electric guitar duties, as well as playing barbarian organ. This crank driven instrument has no connection to Mongol invaders, but takes its name from a corruption of Barbieri, it's Italian inventor's name. The studio ensemble is rounded out by Audrey's long time collaborator Bill Chambers (father of Kasey Chambers, and Audrey's "favourite ex-boyfriend") on guitars, dobro and lap steel, locals Carrie Rodriguez and Darcie Deaville on fiddles and vocals, and Jimmy LaFave sidemen Will Landin on bass and Wally Doggett on percussion. Kimmie Rhodes also contributes some delightful harmony vocals.

Audrey wears both her heart and her influences on her sleeve. Her contemporaries (and peers) in the singer/songwriter neighbourhood she frequents include, Eliza Gilkyson and Katy Moffatt, Mary Gauthier, maybe Michelle Shocked. Vocally, her clear, lovely voice has a more traditional, a more old timey feel to it. Not quite Mother Maybelle Carter, but certainly Dottie West, Connie Smith or Patsy Cline. As a songwriter she draws inspiration from traditional country and folk icons Woody Guthrie and Hank Williams, and from latter day carriers of the torch such as Steve Earle, Lucinda Williams, Mary Gauthier, Fred Eaglesmith and Buddy Miller.

Texas kicks off exuberantly with "Love You Like The Earth." It's a spirited, natural delight, coming straight from the heart. While the song has universal application, the idea that it is for one special person is irresistible.

"Karla Faye" is the only cover on Texas. The Mary Gauthier song deals with the execution of double murderer Karla Faye Tucker in 1998. Tucker was the first woman executed in Texas since the 1860s and during her 15 years on death row had found faith and was ministering to fellow prisoners. The song charts the same territory as Steve Earle's "Over Yonder." Neither song seeks to excuse or minimize the horror of the crimes committed. They simply ask whether compassion and mercy as a path to redemption might not be a better option than the admonition, "You better pray, pray, pray, you find mercy in the sky."

Audrey's clear strong vocal and Bill Chambers' sombre lap steel bring a new poignancy to a fine song. It brings to mind a cartoon that appeared around the time of Tucker's execution, which depicted a gateway topped with a sign reading "Texas Rehabilitation Facility." The gateway leads to a graveyard! Tucker's final plea for clemency was infamously mocked by then Presidential candidate George W Bush.

The atmospheric "Song For Harlan" pays tribute to legendary Nashville songwriter and Country Music Hall of Famer Harlan Howard. Howard died in March 2002, and Audrey clearly seeks to emulate the directness and simplicity that characterizes his vast catalogue. Both songwriters forsake obscure imagery and clever wordplay, for the immediacy of simple stories about real emotions. Just as Howard's "I Fall To Pieces" is about just that, tracks like "Song For Harlan", "My Father," "Hole In My Heart" and "Missin' Mez", are boldly honest statements of fidelity and faith, courage and conviction.

Propelled by Bill Chambers' keening lap steel, "Ball And Chain" could well be one of the best Hank Williams songs not written by Hank Williams. This is classic honky tonk heartache, and despite feeling "Tired and broke, down and ashamed", we get the feeling that the ball and chain

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won't be quite enough to stop this girl kicking up her heels.

Preceded by a little studio banter in which agreement seems to be reached that Gabe Rhodes will be a candidate for President next time round, "Billy Joe" is dedicated to Billy Joe Shaver. It is a testament to the resilience and fighting spirit shown by Billy Joe in the face of overwhelming loss. In stark contrast to the sadness and anger of Todd Snider's "Waco Moon" which also deals with the death of Billy Joe's son and bandmate Eddy, the song focuses on healing and the power of faith. Among swirling fiddles Audrey is comforted by the belief that despite his trials Billy Joe will again find love and contentment. The song projects a resonant optimism about the capacity of the human spirit to transcend adversity.

The final two songs on Texas provide its finest moments. On "Shine" Audrey's gentle vocal shimmers over delicate acoustic guitars and atmospheric organ in the simplest of arrangements. "Shine" charts the territory of the uncertain, the chasing of dreams, but offers hope to the lost and perplexed. Rhodes' adds to the ambience with some elegant gut-string guitar

"One Eye" is a treat. Dancing fiddles and swinging steel guitars underpin a lazy, rolling dancehall romp straight out of Gruene Hall, that sees Audrey trading alternate verses with the sugar sweet Rosie Flores like vocals of Carrie Rodriguez, and the unmistakable growl of Bill Chambers, who can sound a little like John Prine after a heavy night.

Texas sees Audrey Auld Mezera among friends in a comfortable place making impressive Texas flavoured music in Texas, with Texans, some of it about Texans. It's a Texan recording right down to the gorgeous cover painting by Austin artist Gary Martin.

Texas just might just want you anyway Audrey, but it will never be anything more than a loan. Audrey Auld Mezera will continue to draw inspiration from the well of Texan tradition but will remain a courageous and original artist, (most days.)

**Michael Hansen**