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Music Review: Adam Zwig
"Cast Iron Letters"
Conscious Records
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Adam Zwig is a man who seems comfortable with himself.

As the founder, songwriter and lead guitarist for Shapeshifter, Zwig took a giant step back from his rock roots after "My Enemy" and other songs propelled the band up the charts and into critics' "best of" lists. In 2002, the slide-guitar whiz opted to go solo.

At that time, he told reviewers that he wanted to move away from commercial material. His goal was to emulate "real" singer songwriters who told serious, heartfelt stories that give the big picture ala Bob Dylan.

Mission accomplished.

With the release of his third solo album, Cast Iron Letters, Zwig's move from rock-and-roll favorite to thoughtful artist with stories to tell seems complete. The 13-track CD consists of some lovely, winding melodies that serve as the soundtrack to songs about love, human failings, and justice.

Zwig works as a psychotherapist by day, so it seems he would have plenty of material from which to work. Indeed, the lyrics often center on the relationship between individuals and the harried pace of life, speaking of longings for freedom.

The lead track, "Castaway," centers on

freedom ("We are riding down to the sea, we are riding down to be free"). It's so charming, one might wonder if it was a classic released a time ago that was somehow missed or forgotten. Zwig's music and the accompanying vocals have the easy style - -if not the haunting individuality – of Neil Young.

That's not to say the album is flawless. Despite the magnificent steel guitar playing on "False Messiah," the lyrics are – well – a bit heavy – spreading the word of a Messiah's secret potion and so forth - and come off as just a tad sanctimonious.

Overall, Adam Zwig is a welcome voice in the jam-packed commercial music world. If he continues to broaden his vocal range and refine his writing as he moves ahead, he could also be a significant one.