

Calendar and City Pick: Todd Snider

Todd Snider Thursday, 8 p.m., Maintenance Shop, Ames. Sold out.

Todd Snider isn't quite the "old timer" he professes to be in "Age Like Wine," the opening track to his brilliant new album, "East Nashville Skyline," but he writes and performs songs with the kind of maturity, insight and wit that is beyond his years. Though the title of Snider's sixth studio album might be a tip of the hat to Bob Dylan's "Nashville Skyline" and its tongue-in-cheek humor is like that of John Prine, whose Oh Boy Records issued the CD, Snider would likely be embarrassed by the obvious comparisons to the two folk music legends, even though he's as deserving as any young singer-songwriter in America today.

Snider has gained critical acclaim in the past for flashes of brilliance, but he delivers his immense talent as a lyricist, humorist, vocalist and altruist on "East Nashville Skyline," his finest recording to date and arguably the best album of 2004. "Alcohol and Pills" is a chilling and touching tribute to artists who have struggled with fame and "Iron Mike's Main Man's Last Request" is quintessential Snider – dry, yet outrageous and full of innuendo.

One of the most entertaining live performers to grace a stage in Central Iowa, it's not surprising every ticket has been sold for Snider's return to the Maintenance Shop on Thursday where he draws legions of fans each time he visits. If you're one of the fortunate few to have a ticket – cherish it. If not, heed Snider's advice on the finale of his new album, "Enjoy Yourself," when he sings, "It's later than you think," and spend the evening with "East Nashville Skyline." Get out and see the world – through Snider's eyes.

CV