

JAVA

BY MARYELLEN FILLO

SPILLING THE BEANS | A COFFEE BREAK WITH MATT FITZGIBBONS

He's Proud To Be An American, And Singing About It

Although it might be classified as patriotic music, don't bother searching this CD's liner notes for a fife and drum corps or a professional bugler.

Matt Fitzgibbons, a singer-songwriter from Sherman, released on Veterans Day a collection of songs, "Patriot 2: A Celebration of Liberty" — none of which will inspire you to march or don a tri-cornered hat.

The 39-year-old Web designer played nearly every instrument on this compilation of songs, with titles such as "Freedom" and "Remember the Americans," in styles that range from stark, strident Pink Floyd-like guitars to ethereal New Age bookstore-type sounds.

But it's Fitzgibbons' passion for the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights that comes through loudest. His hope is that educators might share his message of American pride with their students, and that all of us remember what it means to be an American.

Q: *I can't say I've ever seen the Declaration of Independence on a rock musician's website. What made you want to combine modern music and patriotism?*

A: Well, studying philosophy and teaching English as a second language both in Japan and in Manhattan made me realize that what distinguishes Americans



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from the rest of the world are the simple but timeless concepts in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. These principles, and writing original music, have always been my two passions, so I figured combining them would be a way for me to look back in years to come and know I tried to do my part.

Q: *You've somehow managed to write patriotic music without its being hokey or Americana. Are people surprised by the style of your music?*

A: Throughout our history, patriotic music has always expressed the hopes and calls to action of that generation. I think really caring about something makes it

much easier to write about sincerely, and to hopefully do it in a way that people of that time appreciate. If my music touches people and makes them think about who we are and what made us the most successful and freest nation in history, then I've accomplished my goals.

Q: *Your songs are essentially about our government, our troops and the war, yet your music isn't political.*

A: That was exactly what I had hoped to do. I'm only writing about what our founding fathers believed, what made our country what it is. And if you agree with the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights, then there's nothing political about it.

Q: *Do you think it's truly possible for Americans to support the troops while opposing the war?*

A: We elected the representatives who sent the troops. It's our responsibility to support the troops completely because ultimately, we sent them. No war in our history has ever been popular. My goal is to unite rather than divide, and that's why I don't get into any specific political issues on the album.

— Teresa M. Pelham,
Special to The Courant