

CD Review: Iron and Wine — Kiss Each Other Clean

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Iron and Wine

Kiss Each Other Clean

Warner Brothers

By [Al Kaufman](#)

With *Kiss Each Other Clean*, Sam Beam, the person behind Iron and Wine, should finally rid himself of the neo-folkie tag. While 2007's *The Shepherd's Dog* hinted at a fuller sound, Beam goes in full force on *Kiss Each Other Clean*.

The CD opens with "Walking Far From Home," a surreal laundry list of what feels like post-apocalyptic observations while walking in a faraway land that feels very close. It is there that he meets sinners, people in need, and people attempting to take some sort of stand. The hissings and back-up chorus enhance the ominous mood.

From there, Beam makes good use of all the musical stylings at his avail. There's the funky bass line that drives "[Me and Lazarus](#)," the moody electronic beats behind "[Monkeys Uptown](#)," the jarring guitar and African rhythms of "[Rabbit Will Run](#)," and funky horns on "Big Burned Hand."

But this is still an Iron and Wine CD. Beam includes lots of dark imagery and animal metaphors. The agnostic sings of evil and, if not necessarily redemption, at least hope. He paints a vivid scene with simple words and phrases, much like author Cormac McCarthy. He uses his back-up singers, with their "oohs" and "aahs," to set the perfect mood. They become the most important instrument on the CD and help to give it its surprisingly cohesive quality.

Beam said he was going for a '70s feel to this CD, and that is most apparent on "[Glad Man Singing](#)," in which he sounds like Al "Year of the Cat" Stewart. "[Tree By the River](#)" and "Half Moon" also have a breezy, summertime feel to them. These are the songs that longtime fans will feel most familiar with.

Kiss Each Other Clean closes with the epic "Your Fake Name Is Good Enough for Me." The song opens with funky African rhythms and closes with fuzzy guitars. It is a song about the need to become whole. "We will become the liked and the loathed/We will become the bruise and the blow," he practically chants. It is a gorgeous attempt at self-realization. It is something that Beam has achieved on *Kiss Each Other Clean*.