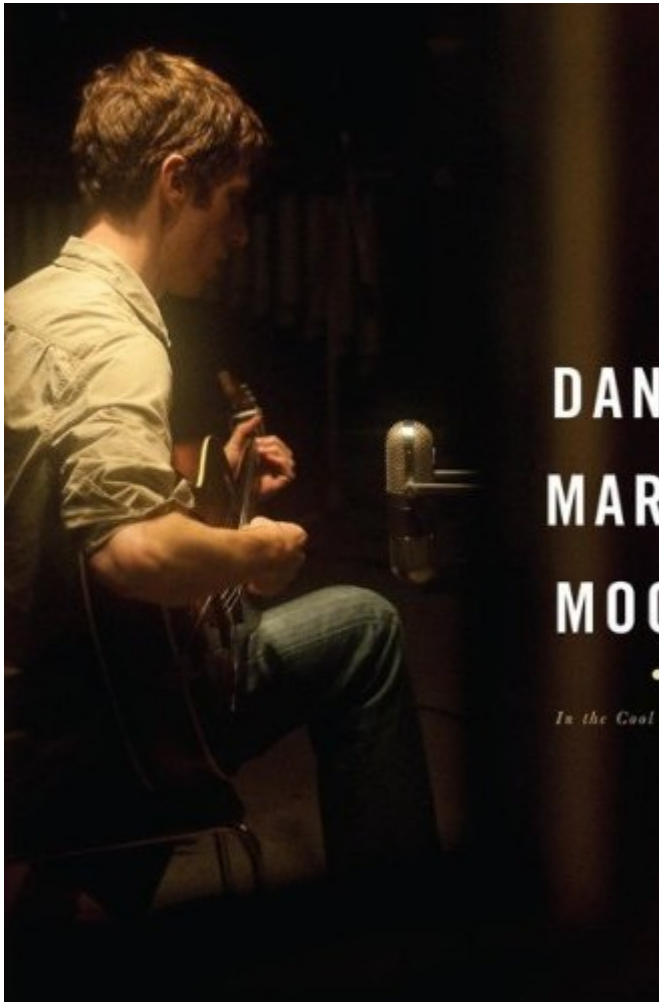


In the Cool of the Day, by Daniel Martin Moore

reviewed by [Steve Thorngate](#) in the [July 12, 2011](#) issue

In Review



In the Cool of the Day

By Daniel Martin Moore

Sub Pop

Nostalgic country-gospel records inhabit a liminal space between personal-historical document and genuine religious statement: *these songs meant a lot to my family, and they mean something ambiguous to me*. One of the best is Iris DeMent's *Lifeline*, on which the Pentecostal-raised agnostic gives heartfelt readings of her mother's favorite songs and even pens a thoroughly biblical original.

Daniel Martin Moore's latest follows this path but enlivens it a bit. Its 11 songs include seven traditional hymns. The arrangements—produced by Moore and Daniel Joseph Dorff—start with low-key traditional gospel but take a measure of liberty to loosen things up.

An "In the Garden" shuffle is a stylistic bridge too far, and a barebones "It Is Well with My Soul" exposes Moore's vocal limits. But he nails it with the up-tempo standard "Dark Road"—his mellow singing rendering the lyric deeply personal—and the straight-ahead jam on "Up Above My Head." Best of all is the title track, on which Moore's voice and Dorff's spare piano capture the haunting harmony of Jean Ritchie's song:

Moore makes some pointed edits: the second-coming-themed verse of "It Is Well" substitutes "the light" for "the Lord"; in "Up Above My Head," Moore really does believe there's "joy" somewhere, not "a heaven" or "a God." An ostensible original called "Come All Ye Tenderhearted" draws heavily from "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus"—but without the title phrase.

Moore's goal is to make the religious content more pluralistic and accessible. But there's too much Christian material here to neutralize it. Instead, we hear the changes with Christian ears: "the light" as a name for Christ, "joy" as a fruit of the Spirit, "come all ye tenderhearted" as an invitation to embrace the song's eschatological hope.

Moore's original songs continue in this vein of Christian themes never quite named. The approach may be studiously noncreedal, but it's overflowing with gospel.