

REVIEWS

CRAIG FINN

*Clear Heart Full Eyes*

[Vagrant]

After five albums with Brooklyn indie rockers the Hold Steady, frontman Craig Finn has made his first foray into solo territory. While *Clear Heart Full Eyes* is a down-tempo, alt-country departure from Finn's usual classic-rock *oeuvre*, this is no throwaway acoustic cop-out. In lieu of electric guitar we find pedal steel warbling to fill in the negative space. The album's production sounds thin and almost minimalist compared to the stadium-friendly sounds of the Hold Steady, emphasizing a suitable dryness in his vocal delivery. Finn's lyrics continue to impress, with heart-wrenching stories of unfortunate people between offhand references to Freddie Mercury and Joan Didion. Though religion is a recurring theme, even fans might be taken aback by the determined focus on Jesus. *Clear Heart* shows a sense of purpose that keep these songs as ever coming off as castoffs from Finn's day job. —Amanda Farah

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