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Gary Shearston - *Renegade* CD review by Ian Dearden

The word "legend" is used freely in the music world, but few could be more entitled to its use than Gary Shearston.

With a career that stretches back to late 1950s Sydney, Gary rode the crest of the folk revival from the early 1960s on, both as a songwriter, and as one of the leading lights in recording and performing Australian traditional bush music.

He continues to be a talented songwriter, and on *Renegade*, recorded in Stanthorpe in 2010, it is clear that the flame which has burnt for more than 50 years, still burns strong.

For a man who has devoted so much of his life to music, with diversions along the way, some of which he sings about (including a significant period in the Anglican priesthood), Gary still has much to say, and is not afraid to say it, in song.

The 16 songs on this collection, superbly recorded by Roger Ilott at his Restless Music studio, find Gary Shearston, the songwriter, ranging over a wide variety of topics.

The album opens with a song which reflects a life of joy, pain, and love in a uniquely Australian landscape (*Live in Love*).

Then we move to songs which reflect a life in conflict with a conservative body politic (*Truth Is, Hey Little Lassie*), songs which celebrate great Australians (*Paint Me A Painting, Painter, His Name Was Edgar Waters*), and a song which sums up Aussies and their capacity to praise in a myriad of different ways (*She's a Clasiic*).

It is, however, the final (title) song, *Renegade*, which best sums up a lifetime of personal and artistic struggle and the hope that survives above all.

Throughout the album, we hear the "voice" of a legend who readily acknowledges his flaws and frailties, but has never lost his faith in music and those (including himself) who sing and play it.

Gary hasn't made this album alone - in addition to his talents as a recording engineer, multi-instrumentalist Roger Ilott

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contributes superb electric guitar playing that underpins the entire album, as well as keyboards, mandolin, banjo, pedal steel and acoustic guitar ..oh, and backing vocals.

The gorgeous voice of Penny Davies also lifts a number of the tracks, while the rock solid rhythm section of Lee Williams (bass) and Luke Shearston (drums) keeps the whole album firmly anchored in time (and space!)

Yes, here's living proof you can reach your seventies (sorry Gary, Wikipedia says so, so it must be true), spend your entire adult life in music, and still have a voice, something to say, and the determination to say (or rather, sing) it! Get your hands on this album and find out for yourself! You can find out more at www.garyshearston.com.

