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STEVE EARLE & THE DUKES

★★★★

So You Wannabe An Outlaw

(WARNER) www.steveearle.com



Outlaw music is still an emblem of the outsider, a designation for those that would use its legacy for their own pursuits. In reality, though, it ceased to be a signifier by the time its bellwether Waylon Jennings released *I've Always Been Crazy* in 1978. That hasn't stopped Earle trading on

its legacy since his debut in 1986 and he unapologetically sees his seventeenth studio album as an homage to that genre and its principal proponents. In so doing he has created his best work in many a year, as he foregoes the more reflective style of the recent *Terraplane* and *Colvin & Earle* in favour of a harder, guitar-driven style whilst utilising old country tropes of life on the road, the impact of harsh lifestyles, and family disputes.

In so doing he recalls the directness of his best work and makes his audience consider how the desolate 'Fixing To Die' and defeated tone of 'This Is How It Ends' may represent the tortuous journey Earle's life has been since the bluster of his youth. However, not everything is swagger and bravado, with the heart-wrenching 'Girl On The Mountain' and tender ode to Guy Clark, 'Goodbye Michelangelo' demonstrating that Earle can still draw a tear.

Simon Rowland