

FROM BULLZ-EYE - 4.20.06

Jeff Solomon: Around the Square

Label: self-released Rating: **4 Stars** 

Jeff Solomon may describe his music on his MySpace page as "good old-fashioned ukulele pop," but, while there's certainly ukulele to be had among the six songs on his debut EP, Around the Square, it's full of plenty of other instrumentation as well. The lead track, "Temporary Song," is probably the closest any American is ever going to get to emulating early Belle & Sebastian, but the following song, while still finding Solomon's voice a dead ringer for Stuart Murdoch, is more musically quirky; the verse is straightforward, but the trombone-driven chorus has more ups and downs than a rollercoaster. "Like Yesterday" begins as a Ben Folds-styled piano number, but, come the chorus, it's ukulele-a-go-go; meanwhile, the alto sax solo on "Am I Still?" is as funky as the backing vocals are soulful, and closer "Gramercy" is a suitably epic finale. With production from Phil Ramone protégé Andrew Felluss (who can make the decidedly rare claim that he's worked with both Paul Simon and Jay-Z), this is a stellar debut from Solomon which, one can only hope, will be followed in short order by a full-length release. ~Will Harris (04/20/06)