

LEIF ENGER: Jake Reum's trailer house is so close to Highway 169 that his home recording studio is never quite free from the sound of moving traffic. The studio is a tiny room stuffed with electronic gear, keyboards, and mixers and microphones. There are speakers the size of file cabinets and a box full of copies of Reum's first and only release, a cassette of original rock and roll songs called *Make Love Real*.

[ROCK MUSIC]

(SINGING) Cause this girl has been with me many times before

At the borderline of my home

Yeah, yeah

But she is my dream

JAKE REUM: I have a lot of people that tell me they like it. They play it all the time. Just knowing that people like it, that's what makes me happy.

LEIF ENGER: So far, most of Reum's fans are his friends, people he knows from his job at the casino down the road. The only places you can buy *Make Love Real* are a music store in Brainerd and a hardware in Garrison. Recorded in Chicago with the best studio musicians Reum could afford, the tale of the tape is one of high hopes and heartbreak. After investing months and thousands of dollars, Reum went to Los Angeles to shop the tunes and try to find someone who could find him an audience.

JAKE REUM: You beg.

[LAUGHS]

A little groveling here and there. Well, I didn't seem to shake Los Angeles. Like I was-- I had this delusionary fantasy that they might. Extremely disappointing for me because it was like your heart and soul and putting everything. And then to have the people say, well, no, thanks.

LEIF ENGER: There's probably not a musician alive, successful or not, who doesn't have similar stories. But Reum says for him, rejection was nothing new. As a teenager, he lived in white foster homes and orphanages in Montana, where he was discouraged from learning or living his native culture.

Later, he says, he became a derelict. There are years of his life he won't talk about, hard years before his marriage and recent move to his wife's home at Mille Lacs. He says his personal direction and his drive to write music were rescued only when he returned to Montana to the Fort Peck Reservation.

JAKE REUM: I got reacquainted with my father, and my half brothers and half sisters and my uncles. Layton, Clayton, Sam, my aunts, they looked out for me when I was there. And they protected me from the few guys that wanted to give me some lumps.

You get into all of that saved soul and all of them words that are descriptive like that. You mean you're messing around in some dangerous territory. But I basically am saying that it was people who loved and cared about me that made the difference.

[ROCK MUSIC] I know someday when you read my book

Look on the shelf

You look into my mirrors and see yourself

LEIF ENGER: Reum left the reservation several years later with a new sense of heritage and a renewed commitment to popular music. He created his own label, Red Alternative Records, and released his cassette. Earlier this year, at a trade show, the tape snagged the interest of Sound of America Records, a native-oriented New Mexico company that helped produce the soundtrack to *Dances with Wolves*.

TOM BEE: I liked his voice. I think he reminded me kind of a cross between a Bruce Springsteen and a rough sounding Michael Bolton, but a lot of emotion in the voice.

LEIF ENGER: Producer Tom Bee says, though nothing is signed yet, the company plans to remix *Make Love Real* for reissue as a compact disk on its Warrior Label. The deal will include a commitment for at least one more album.

JAKE REUM: These guys are willing to lend a helping hand and a pretty big one at that. Every artist wants recognition. And of course, you get your naysayers too, that say, well, don't quit your day job.

LEIF ENGER: Garrison musician Jake Reum. Sound of America plans to release his disk next December. Leif Enger Mainstreet Radio.

[ROCK MUSIC]

JAKE REUM: (SINGING) 1, 2, 3

So you're standing on the street

Oh, baby, you look so sweet

Oh, sugar made me mad

I feel that heat, yeah