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HALF SEAS OVER

Half Seas Over

BROWNSWOOD RECORDINGS

★★★★

Country/jazz hybrid, on Gilles Peterson's label

Half Seas Over is a project fronted by Adam McBride-Smith, a singer songwriter from Oklahoma who lists Johnny Cash and Gillian Welch as influences, but whose literate ballads resemble '70s West Coast troubadours like Jackson Browne. The wildcard here is his collaborator, Elan Mehler,

a pianist from Brooklyn who provides a country-meets-jazz accompaniment, with help from drums, double bass and accordion. There are sparse covers of Skip James' "Cypress Grove" and Townes Van Zandt's "Rake", but the highlights are the original ballads, like the James Taylor-inspired "The New Breed". *John Lewis*