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KEVIN GORDON Most articles about Nashville singer-songwriter Kevin Gordon hasten to point out that he's a published poet who graduated from the prestigious Iowa Writers' Workshop. His songs are free of literary pretense, though: starting with his full-length debut, 1998's *Cadillac Jack's #1 Son*, he's been writing economical but finely etched narratives and setting them to an earthy mix of backwoods country, big-city blues, and febrile Cajun sounds. For the new *O Come Look at the Burning* (Crowville Collective), his first album in five years, he captures the power and unvarnished aesthetic of his band's live shows; he and coproducer Joe McMahan decided to track the album live in a converted East Nashville house, even including scratch vocals and studio chatter in the finished songs. It's an aching, baleful record with a pair of superb covers: he arranges a slowed-down, swamped-up take on the Eddie Hinton obscurity "Something Heavy," while his vocal vamps match the band's shambling, almost chaotic playing on Little Walter's blues classic "Crazy Mixed Up World." But it's the ten originals on the album that truly show his mastery of American vernacular music. Singing in a beautifully weathered voice, Gordon navigates the sad-eyed blues of "Watching the Sun Go Down," the storming Springsteen-style roots pop of "24 Diamonds," and the hillbilly lament "Calhoun" with an easy, alchemical grace. The Waco Brothers headline. 10 PM, FitzGerald's, 6615 Roosevelt, Berwyn, 708-788-2118 or 312-559-1212, \$12. --**Bob Mehr**