

LONESOME HIGHWAY ALBUM REVIEW

Brooks Williams *Work My Claim* Self Release

A singer-songwriter that has released more than 20 albums across a 30-year career span deserves to be given the highest of accolades when acknowledging contemporary Folk/Roots artists. Williams was born in Statesboro, Georgia and learned his craft in the bars and coffee houses of Boston, alongside many other wannabees on the Folk circuit in the late 70's. His debut album appeared in 1990 and over the next ten years he followed it with a regular output of recordings that proved his prolific talents as a songwriter of some depth and a very accomplished acoustic guitar player.

This release marks his 30th anniversary in a business that is famous for its high attrition rate and the roads are scattered with the bones of many performers who went before and after, in search of a modicum of fame and perhaps, a living.

The twelve songs featured here are taken from eight of his releases, *LUCKY STAR* (2018), winning out with three tracks included. There is also a cover of a Duke Ellington song, *I Got It Bad* (and that ain't good), that seems gratuitous, given the huge amount of material he has to choose from his self-penned back catalogue.

The early period of his career, 1990 – 1998 is represented by only four songs and although Williams states that he has chosen his favourite songs, one has to wonder if a poll taken from his fan-base might have resulted in a more even spread of this talented troubadour across his back catalogue.

Williams displays a healthy interest in different genres as he comfortably skips between Folk, Blues and Roots based songs, with an array of talented guests joining him to reinterpret these songs and present fresh arrangements. The fiddle playing of both Aaron Catlow and John McCusker is very prevalent on the opening four songs, *Inland Sailor*, *King Of California*, *Frank Delandry* and *Seven Sisters*. The blues then kick in for a few songs, with *You Don't Know My Mind* and *Here Comes the Blues* highlighting the playing of Jim Henry (mandolin) and Phil Richardson (piano). There is a light swing to *Whatever It Takes* and *Georgia* and the gentle vocals of Christine Collister feature.

The final two tracks, *Jump That Train* and *My Turn Now*, are acoustic blues with just Brooks on acoustic guitar and vocals, joined again by Collister, in what is a fine example of his bottleneck slide and finger picking techniques.

Listening to his body of work, there are many excellent albums, including live, compilation and tribute projects, which have all added to what stands as a very successful career.

Review by Paul McGee

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