

## BENTLEY'S BANDSTAND



### Watermelon Slim

Escape From The Chicken Coop

NorthernBlues Records

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One thing needs to be made perfectly clear right away. There just isn't anyone out there right now quite like Watermelon Slim. He doesn't act like other humans, and he sure doesn't sing like them. There is a backwoods aura to the man's voice that sounds like he grew up making moonshine, and spent a few years outrunning the law before getting caught and spending some time as a guest of the state. There are miles and miles of experience on Watermelon Slim's soul, and you can hear it in every word he sings. In real life, the Vietnam vet also drove commercial rigs across the country and has a bona fide understanding of what it's like to be southbound and down. After three burning blues albums, *Escape From The Chicken Coop* switches gears a bit and heads for the country corner, though it's such a tongue and groove fit with the blues there's no need to pitch pennies on what to call this music. What it is is a slice of American reality that captures what life is like outside the media glare of big cities, instead sharing the feel of big dance halls located on the edge of town where people go on Saturday night to drink, dance and do their damndest to forget the pressures of life. Roy Acuff's "Wreck of the Highway" shows the heart of where Watermelon Slim is heading, with originals like "America's Wives," "Hank Williams You Wrote My Life" and "18, 18 Wheeler" demonstrating where he's been. The next time the polish of modern music has you reaching for the eject button, consider these songs as an alluring alternative. They may not make the charts or get talked about on television, but out where the working class live, Watermelon Slim will be tearing up the highway and smiling all the way to the barroom.

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