

Watermelon Slim advance review....June 9, 2013...

WATERMELON SLIM AND THE WORKERS

BULL GOOSE ROOSTER

NORTHERN BLUES MUSIC NBM 0064

TOMORROW NIGHT–BULL GOOSE ROOSTER–OVER THE HORIZON–VIGILANTE MAN–A WRENCH IN THE MACHINE–I’M A KING BEE–PRISON WALLS–BLUE FREIGHTLINER–SCRATCH MY BACK–I AIN’T WHISTLING DIXIE–TAKE MY MOTHER HOME–THE WOBBLE–TRUCKING CLASS–NORTHWEST PASSAGE–FOREIGN POLICY BLUES–WORDS ARE COMING TO AN END

For those who may not be familiar with Watermelon Slim, he was born Bill Homans, in Boston, MA. He’s served in Vietnam, been a long-haul trucker, sawmiller, and, yes, a watermelon farmer. He’s got a Mensa-registered IQ, and if you bowl him for beers, be prepared to buy. Oh yeah–he’s also one of the premier bluesmen on the contemporary scene today, and his latest album for Northern Blues, scheduled to hit the streets on June 25, is entitled “Bull Goose Rooster,” and finds Slim reunited with his ace backing band, The Workers, on nine originals and seven very special covers.

Slim is on vocals, harp, and slide guitar, and is joined by Michael Newberry on drums, Cliff Belcher on bass, and Ronnie McMullen and Ike Lamb on guitars. As a man who obviously wears many hats, Slim takes this album in just as many varied directions, while staying true to the blues and to the historical music of the American South.

Slim feels that his guitar playing is at its highest level of his career, and we agree. Plus, his harp blowin’ ain’t too shabby, either, as he kicks things off with the Junior Wells classic, “Tomorrow Night,” and keeps the swagger goin’ with the swampadelic “I’m A King Bee.” The title cut is a slide-driven true story of a rooster who checks out everyone who comes into the parking lot of the U. S. Post Office in Key West, FL. He keeps the slide burnin’ on “I Ain’t Whisling Dixie,” and a great song for the “other 99%,” which is a tale of great whistle-blowers past and present, “Wrench In The Machine.”

Slim tackles some interesting a cappella and sparsely-arranged tunes, also. “Northwest Passage” takes a historical turn, while “Take My Mother Home” is a scintillating slice of traditional African gospel to ease the grief of laying to rest a loved one. And, Danielle Schnebelen duets with Slim over Dennis Borycki’s piano in “Over The Horizon.” It is a somber tale of two souls not necessarily in love but “afraid to be alone.”

He’s not afraid to take a swing at big government, either, with a great read of Woody Guthrie’s “Vigilante Man,” and his original “Foreign Policy Blues,” both set over a marching beat. Perhaps the highlight of the set, tho, is Slim’s impassioned vocal of “Prison Walls,” as he portrays a stir-crazy inmate with “five more years in my temporary grave,” as a forgotten member of society’s “faceless mass.”

It’s great to see Watermelon Slim and the Workers back in the studio, and he has done exactly what he originally intended–make “Bull Goose Rooster” his biggest and best album to date! Until next time...Sheryl and Don Crow, Nashville Blues Society.