

Music Review: Watermelon Slim and The Workers – ‘Bull Goose Rooster’

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Watermelon Slim is a colorful character. He’s been a truck driver, a watermelon farmer, and he’s a Vietnam vet. He also has three college degrees and used to be a member of MENSA. All of that experience and all that intelligence shows through in his music on *Bull Goose Rooster*.

On this CD, Slim offers blues, folk, and outlaw country, most of it telling tales of regular people and workers. Seven of the songs are covers and nine are originals, and all are ear-catching and fun to hear.

Among the highlights of the CD are two a cappella numbers which highlight Slim’s strong, passionate voice. One of these is “Take My Mother Home,” a gospel blues song by Hal Johnson about Jesus’ plea to his disciples to take his mother from the scene. That Slim’s diction is not perfectly clear and his voice obviously untrained just makes the song more emotionally packed. “Northwest Passage,” the other a cappella number, is a Canadian folk song by Stan Rogers, and for the full five minutes, Slim performs unaccompanied and strongly, singing with all his soul. It is an impressive feat.

As for the other songs on the CD, the opening number, “Tomorrow Night,” is a straight-forward roadhouse blues number by Amos Blackmore, and really showcases Slim’s harmonica abilities. Slim and The Workers turn Woody Guthrie’s “Vigilante Man” into a raucous blues rocker and then deliver great blues performances on two Slim Harpo numbers, “Scratch My Back” and “I’m A King Bee.”

Aside from the a cappella numbers, it is on Slim’s original songs that he really shines. “Over The Horizon” is a slow, evocative ballad that sounds a lot like Leon Russell and features great guest vocals by Danielle Schnebelen. “A Wrench in the Machine” is pure outlaw country and along with “Foreign Policy Blues,” and “Trucking Class,” it highlights Slim’s respect for the working class and his fight against the establishment. “Blue Freightliner” and “Trucking Class” also call on Slim’s experience as a truck driver himself for authenticity. “Blue Freightliner” is country blues with a great chugging beat, and “Trucking Class” is a country storytelling song in the style of Charlie Daniels or Waylon Jennings.

“Prison Walls” is another standout song, featuring Slim’s excellent slide guitar for a blues-rock number which deals with the traditional blues topic of the prison experience.

This CD is dedicated to “the whistle-blowers of America.” Slim’s concern for politics and workers’ rights inform much of the music and add depth to what would in any case be a masterful and thoroughly enjoyable roots music outing. It is easy to see why Slim has been nominated for over 20 Blues Music Awards and the winner of several. Expect to see more nominations for *Bull Goose Rooster*.