



Fred Eaglesmith "The Official Bootleg Series Volume 1: Live Solo 2002" Self Release

As you can tell from the title of this near 160 minute long, 2CD collection that captured Fred's *early/late* show solo sets at Philly's Tin Angel on May 31st 2002, this is the first episode of an [intended] ongoing series that will document the many musical faces of Fred Eaglesmith. My recommendation - if they are all this good, they'll simply be essential.

Friday evening gridlock on the New Jersey Turnpike dictated a late arrival for Fred at the Pennsylvania venue, literally minutes before he was due onstage. As a result, on disc one, the opening cut, "Freight Train," amounts to Fred's sound check, and as his stage show evolves the sound becomes more and more refined. Across the two sets, there are thirty-four robust chunks of *Fredology* [no repeat tunes], complete with the Canadian's highly original [and consistently hilarious] between song northern narratives and asides, including reference to *the 1958 Case VA tractor he had just bought, American and Canadian gun control laws, fathers-in-law, the four gazillion relationship [ie. love] songs that plague the planet* and more.

I don't intend reviewing, in detail, many songs on these discs, since it's a well known fact that if Eaglesmith's lyrics aren't focusing on animals or machinery [farm tractors, snow ploughs, trains etc.] then they generally feature the lives of the gritty characters, barely getting by, who earn a living operating machinery. The latter is a real life situation with which Fred is all too familiar. I'd also add at this juncture that *love songs* are not a major feature of Fred's canon, but here's an outline of what we have on "**Live Solo 2002.**" Solo studio renditions, by Fred, of "Steam" and "Bob's Dogs & Burgs" were only previously available on the eighteen-track charity CD release, "**Hobo Stew**" [#], the proceeds of which will restore the 1902 town hall in Waterford, Ontario. "Tommy & Joe," which follows the Tin Angel reading of "Steam," is an old song that Fred has never committed to a recording before – in the introduction he dedicates it to Steve Buschel who recorded these discs.

The bulk of the material on "**Live Solo 2002,**" whether studio renditions or live versions, were previously cut with Fred's band[s], and appeared on albums from as long ago as "**Indiana Road**" [1987] through to the, at the time, unrecorded "The Rocket," and "Small Motors" which surfaced on this year's stunning collection "**Balin.**" The latter collection featured Eaglesmith's latest team of *road warriors*, The Flathead Noodlers. So here's the kicker – on "**Live Solo 2002,**" you get solo voice and guitar interpretations of those already *familiar songs*. As for Fred tunes unheard on disc till now, they include "It Was You," "Me & Esther" and "Bandages." As the result, the foregoing confer instant and added rarity value to this collection. Of the foregoing new titles, while noting Fred's *negative attitude* toward love songs, "It Was You" is one hell of a killer creation in the mould of that *ghastly genre* – Fred's words, not mine. As for the "Classic Rock Suite," that particular cut finds the Canadian tinkering with the melody of "Stairway To Heaven" and the lyric of Pink Floyd's "Brain Damage." Just a guy from the *great frozen north* havin' some fun.....and an entertaining and integral part of any Fred performance.

Note.

[#] – Available from <http://www.oldtownhall.org/DotNetNuke/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=306>

Folkwax Rating 8 out of 10

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