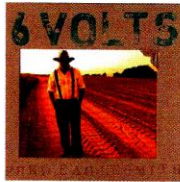


Fred Eaglesmith 6 VOLTS

A Major Label Records

★★★★

Fred's latest is a lo-fi return to his roots music roots



Following last year's musically experimental CHA CHA CHA, Fred shifts 'back to basics' on 6 VOLTS. According to the liner booklet Fred & Co. recorded in 'Analogue, 1 mic, 1 track, mono, ¼ inch reel to reel.' That's not to say 6 VOLTS features one man's voice, acoustic guitar and (new) songs, as Eaglesmith is accompanied by Justine Fischer (bass), Kori Hepner (drums), Matty Simpson (electric guitar, banjo, organ, vocals), Mike Zinger (mandolin, banjo), Roger Marin (pedal steel) and Scott Merritt (organ, tambourine, guitar). Production of the eleven Eaglesmith originals is shared by Fred and long-time studio associate Merritt.

According to Eaglesmith's web site, akin to a lucky dip, one of four (different) photographs appears on front of the 6 VOLTS liner. Regarding the cover picture that heads this review, hands in his pockets, a bare field stretches to the horizon behind Fred, while the imprints of a large tread vehicle marking the soil at his feet. Fred opens his latest collection with the gospel-tinged *Cemetery Road* wherein, the narrator—he operates his father's illegal still—intones at the outset: 'I love you baby and I always will' and (obviously) unrequited closes with: 'That Jasper ain't no good for you.' *Betty* features a couple of desperate characters and a missing hand gun, the title song merges the Fred staples of cars, love lost and a women wearing a 'gun metal blue' dress, while *Katie* is that old folk music staple, a murder ballad.

The principle character in *Dangerous* is precisely that, possessing practically zero awareness that he constantly places himself in harm's way. Memories haunt the narrator in *Cigarette Machine*, while *Johnny Cash* is a lyrically bare-knuckle affair that finds Eaglesmith bitterly reproach the 'come lately fans of the deceased musician.' The question arises: 'is the glass half full, or is the glass half empty?' and I'm afraid Fred's is definitely the latter. His lyrical reasoning borders on elitism. Some folk take a little time to discover they possess an edit button that can discern wheat from chaff. The fact that many finally did (relative to Cash) is surely a reason to celebrate, not deride!

The rise and fall machinations of the music business constitute the focus of the fictional *Betty Oshawa* and the autobiographical *Stars* which follows. In the latter Fred eulogises

his now deceased right-hand man, Willie P. Bennett, with: 'Willie played mandolin, He jumped around the stage, We thought that it would never end.' There is a definite tempo issue as far as 6 VOLTS is concerned, and across thirty-six minutes it rarely varies. For example, the driver in *Trucker Speed* is fuelled up on amphetamine and the ilk, yet the melodic pace is pedestrian. **Arthur Wood.**

www.fredeaglesmith.com

Franc Cinelli GOODTIMES GOODTIMES

Definition Arts

★★★★☆

Very promising newcomer



Franc Cinelli was born in Rome and raised in London and this is a debut album under his own name, there was one called GLUE released under the pseudonym of Goodtimes Goodtimes (just to confuse things) last year. Apart from maybe a touch of first release nerves heaven alone knows why, as this guy is very good ... guitar, harmonica, strong voice and writes memorable songs.

The signature track is *Fortune Teller* with upbeat rhythm, catchy chorus and lyrics which most would say take a justifiably cynical view of a trade which: 'takes your money and sells you dreams you never knew that you wanted'. I guess that Franc will not be top of the playlists with the fairground operators but what the heck it is a fine song. Apart from the two openers, on which the producer has included too much echo and some double tracking, which Cinelli's voice doesn't need, this is all highly enjoyable. Further standouts are *Magic Hour* a heartfelt song of a time to remember a love left behind whilst the singer travels and goes about his work and *By Your Side* to someone who is 'not alone, just say the word and I'll be by your side'.

With seventeen tracks listed my first thoughts were that I hoped this will be good as this will be hard work otherwise. On examination I realised that there ten songs and the rest is made up of acoustic and radio versions of the same material ... there are three versions of *Fortune Teller*. A mark-down for that which is maybe a bit harsh because this album is very enjoyable listening. Like many musical troubadours before, he is serving his time playing gigs in small halls, pubs and front rooms the length and breadth of the UK, Europe and America. Judging by the material and performances on this album he cannot be too far away from a big breakthrough. **Paul Collins**

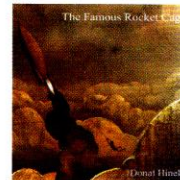
www.franc-cinelli.com

Donal Hinely THE FAMOUS ROCKET CAGE

Scuffletown Records

★★★

Country music from an earlier era...



Austin, Texas born Hinely (acoustic guitar, glass harmonica, ukulele, vocals) has resided in Tennessee for a decade and a half, and on THE FAMOUS ROCKET CAGE there's stalwart support from fellow Music City players Will Kimbrough (electric and resonator guitar, banjo), David Henry (cello, organ, piano, euphonium, accordion, harmony vocals), Viktor Krauss (bass), Tommy Perkinson (drums) and solo recording artist David Mead (harmony vocals).

Co-produced by Hinely and Henry, and recorded at the latter's Nashville facility, True Tone Recording, thirteen of the fourteen songs were penned by Donal, while he collaborated with Todd Daniels on *When The Shouting Is Over*. The uptempo album title song opens this collection and finds Hinely recall (aged nine) a funfair space rocket ride, (later in life) hitchhiking on the highway and, finally, a mystery train ride, all of which he wraps up in the chorus lines: 'I guess it ain't where you're going man, It's all about the ride.' The ensuing *Man Of Consequence* and the later *Five Bucks* are honky-tonk style country tunes, he rocks out on *Loudmouth*, while slowing to a ballad pace, *Saint Pauline* portrays a now caring mother who played 'dress up' in her younger days.

The sound of a train passing through prefaces the one-hundred second long instrumental *Haze Grey*, a cut that also prominently features Henry's cello. Introduced by a finger-picked guitar *A Poor Man's Dream* is a love song whose title is pretty much self-explanatory, and it's followed by the waltz *Sweet Enabler*, while toward the close the piano-led *What We Might Have Been* is this album's big ballad. An old baseball player is the central character in album closer *July*, and when it ends there are ninety seconds of carnival sounds that transport the listener full circle to where Hinely began. Well that appears to be the intention! This Texan's pleasant, but hardly earth shattering, mostly love focused musical vision leans more toward an earlier era when real country music thrived in Music City. **Arthur Wood**

www.donalhinely.com