



Brooks Williams “**Live/Solo**” Red Guitar Blue Music

By way of warming up his fingers and indulging the patrons with a taste of what the evening holds, Brooks opens this *in concert* disc with the cleverly titled blues/jazz guitar work out “Chasing The Groove.” It’s one of four guitar instrumentals on this collection, and a tune that first appeared on his 2001 album “**Skiffle-Bop**.” It was recorded at Brooks’ May 2nd 2003 appearance at Jammin’ Java in Vienna, Virginia, as were the ensuing quartet of tracks. In total nine of the fourteen cuts were captured at this venue. “Dancer’s Delight,” the second track, finds Brooks wrapping his warm vocal chords around a lyric that features a pair of lover’s in the initial flush of passion, not unusually dancing “*three feet off the ground*” as “*evening becomes night*.” The idea for the lyric of “Knife Edge” was inspired by a narrow but dangerous trail path on Maine’s Mount Katahdin, and Williams employs it metaphorically in sketching the relationship of a man and woman that’s *finely balanced*. Brooks specially composed the instrumental “Belfast Blues” for his appearance at the 1994 Belfast Folk Festival, and it previously appeared on the albums “**Knife Edge**” and “**Little Lion**.” Competing the initial series of Jammin’ Java cuts is the percussive and melodically intricate “Mountain,” while the lyric urges a lonely recluse to join society and “*let your life speak through your deeds*.”

One of my all time Williams songs, there’s a few, is the wonderfully hook filled tune “Mercy Illinois.” It’s the oldest recording here, dating from a February 1998 show in Oregon. It’s also one of a pair of songs on “**Live Solo**” that first appeared on “**Back To Mercy**,” and the sad storyline relates to “Squint,” an average happy-go-lucky, beer drinking, pool playing guy who commits suicide. Squint “*left three boys and pretty little wife*,” though the reasons for his actions aren’t explored. While Squint’s funeral service is in progress, an event prominently publicised in the local newspaper, robbers from the South break into the dead man’s home. “Kar Kar” is an instrumental, and was captured in performance at the Tin Angel in Philly. And what a performance it was, as you can literally hear and feel the vehicular motion in Brooks’ guitar work. It’s followed by the gospel flavoured “Restless,” while “While The Night-time Sings” reprises the title cut of Brooks 1991 self-released album.

The segue of “Singing In The Dark” and the “Half The Grace” were cut at Jammin’ Java, while “Weary Of The Moon” is a gentle ballad, the midway bridge and ending of which finds Brooks amply displaying his dexterity with six strings. There’s nothing like a tune about an old dog who dies to raise the emotional temperature of an audience, and Brooks’ lyrically enhanced take on the traditional “Old Blue” is certainly one of those. “Joyful, Joyful” finds Brooks closing the show in the same manner as he opened it. This trad. arr. instrumental first appeared on “**Little Lion**,” and features repetitive *nods and winks* to the melody of “Ode To Joy” from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Ladies and gentlemen you’ve just spent some fifty minutes in the company of the estimable acoustic guitar, voice and songs of Mr. Brooks Williams.....

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

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