



Various Artists "**Dressed In Black – A Tribute To Johnny Cash**" Dualtone Records

This eighteen-track compilation consists of Cash originals, co-writes and songs by other writers that *the man in black* has made his own. Some of them even became # 1 Country Chart hits – namely "I Walk The Line" & "There You Go" [1956], "Ballad Of A Teenage Queen" & "Guess Things Happen That Way" [1958], "Ring of Fire" [1963] and "Flesh And Blood" [1970]. The reason for releasing this compilation is that February 26th 2002 marked *the legend's* arrival on the planet, 70 years back. The location - Kingsland, Arkansas. One of a number of Johnny Cash song celebrations released over the past year, the acts participating in this CD collection lean mainly toward the Alt. side of the country market, whatever that means. Frankly it's always been music to me.....

Conspicuously, "A Boy Named Sue" isn't featured on this collection. Anybody who had had the inclination [or audacity] to try covering the July 1969 Country # 1 song would have required a foolhardy streak that spelled S-T-U-P-I-D. That said, Dorsey Burnette's son, Billy, takes on the memorable "Ring Of Fire" while Dale Watson's pick is "I Walk The Line." Hank III opens the disc with "Wreck Of The Old '97," which is credited to Cash, Norman Blake and Robert Johnston. My reckoning is that the credit should read, Trad. Arr. It is one of four songs in this collection that were never Cash hits *pre se*, yet he will irrevocably be associated with the songs. A definitive love song, now some forty years old [or should that be, young], the much covered "I Still Miss Someone," written by Johnny and Roy Cash Jr., is another member of the foursome. "Pack Up Your Sorrows," performed here by the husband and wife team of Bruce Robison and Kelly Willis, plus "I'm Gonna Sit On The Porch And Pick On My Old Guitar" featuring fellow Austinite, Damon Bramlett, complete the quartet.

Elsewhere, gravel voiced Redd Volkaert delivers the simple and self-explanatory "Luther Played The Boogie," while former Cash's former son-in-law, Rodney Crowell, chose "Ballad Of A Teenage Queen." Rosie Flores' takes on Johnny's Mississippi tribute "Big River" and makes it a real keeper, as does Chris Knight with a hauntingly tender reading of the closer "Flesh And Blood."

Here's to the music of the tall, lean *man in black* – there is only one, Johnny Cash, a singer and songwriter supreme.

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

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