



Various Artists **"The Great Tomato Singer/Songwriter Collection"** Tomato Records

Mention the name Tomato Records and most fans of the genre – singer/songwriter – would immediately recall that it was the label that *issued/reissued* the initial eight solo albums by the late Townes Van Zandt, and, for those readers with memories of *decades now distant*, the early career works of Chris Smither and Eric Von Schmidt. While Van Zandt can be heard on three of the nineteen cuts, performing the already familiar – "Our Mother The Mountain," "For The Sake Of The Song" and "Colorado Girl," Messrs. Smither and Von Schmidt feature on a pair of tracks each. In addition, this compilation embraces two recently recorded *solo* selections from *four newcomers* - Tom Burris, Brendan O'Shea, Amanda Tree and Ryan Montbleau. Filling out the disc is a quartet of *historic* recordings – one each – from those folk/blues/country legends Leadbelly [Huddie Ledbetter], Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams and Johnny Cash. Of somewhat less than *audiophile* quality, the latter quartet of *music legends* can, respectively, be heard warbling on "Midnight Special" and "In The Jailhouse Now," while "Jambalaya" and "I Walk The Line" amount to live renditions.

Based out of New York, Tom Burris worked with the indie band Jabbering Trout before Tomato issued his **"For Sale"** solo disc late last year. The Beatlesque "The Fisherman," and "Throttled Up" hail from that recording. The liner booklet indicates that Tomato is scheduled to release an Amanda Tree collection titled **"Find Your Beat"** [Ed. Note. This compilation disc was issued in late February 2003, and there's no sign of it yet]. Her contributions amount to the seven-minute plus long, piano underscored, lyrically meandering and dreamlike "Treasure Island," plus "When I Find Your Beat." The material by Brendan O'Shea and Ryan Montbleau has been drawn from independent releases, and based on the evidence presented, O'Shea – *recorded exclusively for this collection* - is the only newcomer who possesses possible musical longevity.

A mid-price release, Chet Flippo states in his liner notes that this recording works as a primer, that charts, *albeit cursorily*, the work of four generations of American songwriters. It's a free country they say.....

Folkwax Rating 6 out of 10

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