



Bruce Robison **"His Greatest"** Premium Records

It's all about Texas. Houston born, Bandera bred and an Austin resident these many years, long tall Bruce – 6 foot 7 inches - began his recording career back in 1995 with a self-titled set for the short-lived Vireo imprint. A half-dozen creditable studio efforts [+] have followed, plus a 'live' collection shared with older brother Charlie and fellow Texan Jack Ingram, and a Christmas collection with wife Kelly Willis [*]. The foregoing consistently furnished proof that Robison is a talented scribe - in word and melody. A matter of months following the release of **"The New World,"** Bruce returns with the ten-song 'retrospective' **"His Greatest."** That said, this isn't a compilation of previously released cuts, rather, it's a set of freshly recorded interpretations.

Robison's "Travelin' Soldier" appeared on his debut album, and it opens this collection. The Dixie Chicks interpretation was perched at # 1 on the U.S. Country singles chart, on the eve of the Iraq invasion. Concurrently, this Texas trio were touring the U.K. in support of their album **"Home"** [2002]. When, from a London stage, Natalie Maines uttered negative comments regarding President George Walker Bush all hell broke loose. A 'knee jerk' press fueled controversy ensued, U.S. radio stations ceased playing the song and it plummeted down the chart. When no fault of yours, financial intransigence is a bitter pill.

Five of the ten tracks on **"His Greatest"** hail from the Lucky Dog version of Bruce's sophomore album **"Wrapped."** "Angry All The Time" took Tim McGraw to # 1 in the singles chart in 2001, "Desperately" gave George Strait a Top 10 entry three years later, while he topped that chart with the album title track during 2007. The aforementioned quintet is completed by "My Brother And Me" and, finally, there's the Bruce Robison/Marty Muse co-write "Rayne, Louisiana."

Brother Charlie's album **"Life Of The Party"** [1998] opened with Bruce's "Poor Man's Son." Charlie's version, when released as a single, peaked at # 67, and **"His Greatest"** features the first recording of this song by its composer. Completing this collection is "Not Forgotten You" from Bruce's self-titled debut, "Red Letter Day" from the same disc and Bruce's subsequent **"Long Way Home From Anywhere"** [1999], plus Joe Dickens' "The Good Life" which he covered on **"Unleashed Live"** [2000].

Note.

[+] – There are two versions of **"Wrapped"** Bruce's sophomore recording. Initially a 1997, eleven-song self-release on Boar's Nest, it reappeared the following year as twelve song set – including three new tracks – on Pete Anderson's Lucky Dog/Sony label.

[*] – **"Happy Holidays"** began life in 2003 as a seven-song mini album, and three years later resurfaced as a eleven track release.

Folkwax Score 8 out of 10.

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 01/09.