



Lucinda Williams "**Essence**" Lost Highway

To me Lucinda is the female equivalent of Steve Earle as far as the Americana, alt. Country, *whatever we're calling it this week* genre of roots music is concerned. Let me say at this juncture, that both are worthy musicians, but the hype has always far outweighed the substance. Way too far. On my first run through of "**Essence**" I thought she sounded so bored, she could have telephoned the vocals in. I really haven't wavered far from that view. Of course "**Car Wheels On A Gravel Road**" picked up a Grammy and that's precisely when they get to fill your head full of *hype*. And numerous other *four* letter words. I thought that Lucinda was sassy enough a gal to see past the record industry backslapping nonentity that a Grammy represents. Anyway, here's the *essence* of my take. Justify an opening track with five verses, four refrains and a total of twenty-one words - yup, only twenty-one words - that ain't a song, it's a damned repetitious dirge. If she sings this non-song too often, she'll soon be over in the corner with all the other "Lonely Girls." Misery and self loathing is not an art form, yet "Blue" seems to attest that it is. What's more, the letters lu of this song title are picked out in blue ink on the rear of the liner - the b and e are in black lettering. Art form! As for "Bus To Baton Rouge," if you want to hear a great bus song try Gretchen Peters' "Bus To St. Cloud" then tell me the difference. With other tunes bearing titles such as "Are You Down," "Reason To Cry" and "Broken Butterflies" what more needs to be said. Overall, the pace of this disc matches the mood of the lyrics - down, down, and even further down. I guess some blame can be placed at the respective doors of Charlie Sexton and Bo Ramsey [Greg Brown's guitar man], since they produced the contents from origination to fruition. Maybe next time, not this time.....

Folkwax Rating - 4 out of 10

Arthur Wood
Kerrville Kronikles 07/01
[345 words].

Footnote.

While the above text may appear short for a feature, in this instance the idea was to furnish two wildly contrasting opinions regarding Williams', then, latest release. One of the other Folkwax writer's supplied a glowing review of Essence, while mine was less than complimentary. Fifteen-years later, having heard (thankfully from a distance) some of Williams' subsequent recorded works, her penchant for phoning-in the vocals remains a constant.