



Brooks Williams "**Blues & Ballads**" Red Guitar Blue Music Records

I love acoustic music that's stripped back to the sound created by pieces of wood and steel. Fact is, it doesn't get much better when it's delivered by a guitar picker who is as fluid and imaginative as Brooks Williams.....added to which, Williams throws in, oh around nine vocals. Essentially a cover song collection, "**Blues & Ballads**" draws on sources new and old, in the fields of pop, folk and jazz music, while focusing primarily on acknowledged blues songs and instrumentals.

Brooks kicks the album off with an optimistic up-tempo, slide guitar arrangement of the traditional "Weepin' Willow Blues." The Leroy Carr/Don Raye collaboration "In The Evening," a slow shuffle, dates from the early twentieth century. Born during that century's opening decade, Nashville born Carr's alcohol driven lifestyle saw him pass aged thirty way back in 1935, while Washington D.C. born Raye lived into his late seventies. The second of five traditional arranged tracks on "**Blues & Ballads**," the chorus to "Shady Grove" possesses a jerky yet lively rhythm. When Miles Davis' "All Blues" appeared on his 1959 album "**Kind Of Blue**" it was an almost twelve minute long cut, featuring the all-star [supporting] cast of John Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley [saxophones], Bill Evans [piano], Paul Chambers [bass] and Jimmy Cobb [drums]. Here, Williams curtails the tune to a four-minute long instrumental. Originally known as the Duke Ellington penned melody "Never No Lament," when lyricist Bob Russell added words in 1942 and re-titled it "Don't Get Around Any More," he created a lush late night, love themed lyric.

Featuring more slide guitar work "Love In Vain" was penned by the legendary Robert Johnson, while "Tenpenny Bit" is a traditional arranged instrumental based around a series of cyclical guitar figures. The toe tapping "Honey Babe" originally appeared as the Max Steiner penned main theme to the 1955 Raoul Welch directed, WWII movie "**Battle Cry**." When Paul Francis Webster added words, the same year, the song became a # 6 Pop single for Art Mooney & Chorus. The astrologically themed traditional number "Watch the Stars" is followed by the traditional instrumental "Peacemaker's Hornpipe."

Canadian songwriter Bruce Cockburn penned the gospel tinged "One Day I Walk" and included it on his 1971 album "**High Winds White Sky**." Bearing a buoyant "I'm bound for heaven" lyric, the narrator recalls how he was once a beggar and reflects that, one day ere long, he will be again. As for the refrain it runs to "*One day I walk in flowers, One day I walk on stones. Today I walk in hours, One day I shall be home.*" Thomas Andrew Dorsey [not the big band leader of the same name] penned "Take My Hand, Precious Lord," circa 1932, soon after losing his wife Nettie and son during childbirth. Considered by many to be the greatest gospel song ever written, it has been recorded by Mahalia Jackson, Nina Simone and Elvis Presley. On "**Blues & Ballads**" Williams delivers an atmospheric instrumental reading. Brooks closes this disc with the jaunty sing-along "Trouble In Mind." Dating from 1927 the song was written by New Orleans born pianist and bandleader Richard Jones. Eddy Arnold scored a # 7 Country single with the song during 1956, and in the country music genre it has been covered by George Jones and Hank Snow.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

**Arthur Wood.**

Kerrville Kronikles 03/06 & 04/06.