

Welsh Geoff - ROCK AND FRIGIDAIRE (Own Label, no catalogue number)



So many artists disappoint when they get round to releasing a CD; you buy it at a gig, then find when you play it at home it just doesn't capture the essence of that artist or what you specially enjoyed about that artist when seeing them perform live. Of course, that's fine if it's intended as a deliberately different product, a studio production with all the self-evident technical and artistic aspirations that go with such an exercise (as opposed to a basic studio re-creation of the live act).

But the pure studio artefact is not Welsh Geoff's aim; instead, here is a perfect example of a gig-purchase-CD that delivers into your living-room (or wherever) a faithfully-recorded re-creation of Welsh Geoff performing his songs live (with all the pluses of direct miking and none of the drawbacks of a troublesome audience), every song faultlessly reproduced for posterity yet still performed with absolute conviction and confidence.

Geoff's songs are all self-penned, and on many of them he can be termed just not so much a songwriter as a songmaker (in some cases much in the Ray Hearne sense of utilising or paraphrasing existing tunes for his proud local-historical flights of fancy). The songs tend to work on a very immediate level of listener response, for Geoff's gift for stringing together words and language is as pronounced as his gift for guitar and banjo playing (well skilled at all times, yet refusing to steal the limelight from the lyrics). Geoff's expert playing shows a good understanding of the blues and folk idioms, yet his songs might be considered to have more in common with Jake Thackray (than, say, Bert Jansch or John Martyn), in whose recordings an enviable lightness of touch tends to disguise the "profundity dressed up as nonsense".

Many of Geoff's songs concern themselves with whimsical, reminiscence-driven accounts of local characters or places or events: local, that is, to South Wales, Swansea and the Gower region in particular (where Geoff's from, need I say!). This ten-song selection is the tip of Geoff's iceberg (he's written around 100 over the years but only produced two privately-released CDs in the past). From the "local-hero epic" narrative of Big Joe Williams And The Lion to the more reflective portrait of Olchfa Wood, the wry yet affectionate rock'n'roll musings of the title track to the in-joke motorcycle musings of Life's An MZ, the thought-provoking exploration of The 18-Inch Seam to the genial good humour of the gazetteer visited by Dafydd's Bus, Geoff's companionable manner and his easily assured way with his storytelling ensures an immediate appeal for his

songs with almost any audience, who can be relied upon to respond with more than a chuckle and a ready smile on the visage.

His songs may be quirkily individual, but they're also "pretty much self-explanatory, perhaps", as Geoff himself bluntly (if mildly dismissively) states in his pithy liner-note to one song (The Denver Train); for one feels that the songs just find him and trip off his tongue (rather than the other way round). Some listeners may feel that this very ease of communication may be a double-edged sword, in that, because Geoff's superbly-crafted delivery provides an effective first-time-impact for his tall tales or canny commentaries, it may be harder to gauge the depths of those profundities lurking beneath or beyond if you're led to believe you've "got it" first time round.

So don't be deceived - prepare to dig deeper... Or not to worry, for Rock And Frigidaire undeniably succeeds as an entertaining and often fun product that won't disappoint fans of Geoff's writing or his winning live presence.

Check him out now at www.welshgeoff.co.uk