

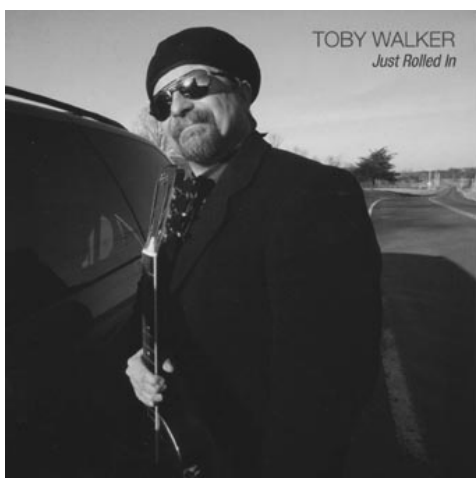


TOBY WALKER - JUST ROLLED IN JANUARY 2008

“Walker is a smooth storyteller who possesses a gritty singing voice that can deliver the blues feeling, but he often just lets his guitar do the talking.”

Toby Walker is a charming entertainer who knows how to work an audience, and you can really appreciate his technique on this recording of a show at Long Island’s Boulton Center before a sellout crowd. The show is intelligently paced, and the songs are interspersed with anecdotes on subjects ranging from previous audience requests to the musicians he encountered during his years on the blues highway.

While he acknowledges that most of his repertoire is songs about “thieving, lying, cheating, stealing, murder and mayhem,”



there is something downright wholesome about Walker’s show.

His easygoing presentation allows him to hold his audience through a set list that ranges from the happy-go-lucky “That’s My Version of A Good Idea” to “Bernie’s Blues,” the truly tragic tale of one of the early blues music archivists who traveled through the south recording his heroes and was forced to bear witness to terrible injustice. Walker is a smooth storyteller and possesses a gritty singing voice that can deliver the blues feeling, but he often just lets his guitar do the talking. And can he make it talk!

On sprightly fingerstyle instrumentals like “Sundance Rag” and the lovely “Ain’t Misbehavin’,” or a bottleneck slide tour de force like “Beefsteak When I’m Hungry,” Walker shows what he learned from his many mentors. He can make his guitar mimic a trotting pony, an angry wife, or, like on Blind Boy Fuller’s “Cat Man Blues,” a “cat wearing a pair of pants.”

Walker has been on the scene long enough to honor traditions, but also take some liberties. He gives a lyrical but old style reading of “St. James Infirmary,” then closes the show with a very unusual and haunting version of “Nobody’s Fault But Mine.”

--Kay Cordtz