

Eric Bell Band - Irish Boy (1998)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Days Of Innocence* 2 *2 Ships* 3 *Ballad By The Irish Sea* 4 *Just To Get By* 5
Sweet Mystery 6 *You Smiled* 7 *Irish Boy* 8 *Priest Of Love* 9 *Standing In The Middle*
10 *You Were One* 11 *Wrong Side Of Town* 12 *Newcastle Bay* Musicians: Eric Bell -
Lead Guitar, Lead Vocals, Backing Vocals Tony Williams - Bass, Lead Vocals, Backing Vocals
Andy Golden – Drums

A welcome reissue for this *Irish Boy*, Eric Bell's solo album was first released in Spain back in 1998. The Dublin born Bell has had a long and varied career, but he will forever be acclaimed as a founding member of Thin Lizzy, the man whose guitar put the fire in the band's first hit, "Whiskey in the Jar." For *Irish Boy*, Bell was joined by two long-time cohorts, co-vocalist/bassist Tony Williams and drummer Alan Golden. The recording was done quickly in just over a week, and Bell, for one, wasn't overly impressed with the results, as he states in the sleeve notes. At times one can see his point, the opening numbers "Days of Innocence" and "2 Ships" are lovely, glowing songs, but lack a touch of the excitement we've come to expect from Bell. But then the trio take up "Ballad by the Irish Sea," washed by waves of guitar that crest in a jubilant Irish jig. Bell's fingers seem to be literally smiling, so filled with joie de vivre is his playing. Similarly, "Just to Get By" is a blistering, foot-stomping, celebration of life, an Irish hoe-down that cries out for a club remix to rocket it into the dance charts. "You Smiled" sounds like its already spun on Top of the Pops, an irresistible British Invasion styled number with a decided Celtic tinge. A far purer R&B illuminates the strutting "Standing in the Middle," while Bell's debt to the blues is repaid on the surf-splashed "Newcastle Bay" and the magnificent "Just to Get By," on the latter the guitarist wrings the emotion out of every haunting note he plays. Coming out of left field, though, is "Priest of Love," a surprising stab at white reggae à la the Police, albeit with Bell's exquisite guitar winding through, and themed around the fate of a rejected visionary. It's not entirely successful, but the lyrics resonate; better is the funky ride through the

"Wrong Side of Town." The album's apotheosis though, is the glorious title track -- an epic ode of a young, homesick, ex-pat -- that shimmers with beauty and emotional truth. Here the rhythm

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section is the solid rock from which Bell's guitar can embark on melancholy journeys, bittersweet treks through the past, and hopeful trips towards future happiness. Bell's guitar is the centerpiece for this set, but Williams and Golden's beautifully understated work throughout provides the fulcrum for this fabulous set. --- Jo-Ann Greene, allmusic.com

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