

Willie Nelson - Country Music (2010)

Written by bluelover

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01. *Man With The Blues*
02. *Seaman's Blues*
03. *Dark As A Dungeon*
04. *Gotta Walk Alone*
05. *Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down*
06. *My Baby's Gone*
07. *Freight Train Boogie*
08. *Satisfied Mind*
09. *You Done Me Wrong*
10. *Pistol Packin' Mama*
11. *Ocean Of Diamonds*
12. *Drinking Champagne*
13. *I Am A Pilgrim*
14. *House Of Gold*
15. *Nobody's Fault But Mine*

Riley Baugus Banjo Shad Cobb Fiddle Mike Compton Mandolin Dennis Crouch Bass (Acoustic) Stuart Duncan Fiddle Jim Lauderdale Vocal Harmony Ronnie McCoury Mandolin Buddy Miller Guitar (Electric), Vocal Harmony Willie Nelson Vocals Russell Pahl Pedal Steel Mickey Raphael Harmonica Chris Sharp Guitar (Acoustic)

Naturally, the not-so-unspoken joke behind the title of Willie Nelson's 2010 album is that it's been so long since he's played straight country music, Nelson needs to clearly label it when he does. Of course, that's not strictly true: just as recently as 2009 he was ripping it up with *Asleep at the Wheel*, turning out a straight-ahead western swing record that is every bit as country as *Country Music*, although it is true that he's never quite cut a collection of country music as hushed and muted as this. The soft-plucked string bass and strummed acoustic guitars are trademarks of T-Bone Burnett, the roots music producer whose well-tailored analog impressionism fetishizes authenticity, prizing every piece of pristinely preserved vintage equipment and then recording them immaculately -- often with appealing results, but with a

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mannered ritualization that's somewhat distancing for those who don't share his obsessions. All this makes Country Music a curious experience: seemingly, this should be well within Nelson's wheelhouse, but he never truly inhabits the songs, partially due to the tasteful remove of Burnett's spare, hazy production. Warm and supple it may be, the production puts a layer of gauze between the listener and the singer, but the singer isn't at his most dynamic, either. To be sure, there's a nicely weathered assurance to Nelson's performance -- his voice never strains, he throws off licks with a casual virtuosity -- but there's no immediacy, either, not the way there was on that duet with Asleep at the Wheel or on his stellar tribute to Cindy Walker in 2006. Most of the time, Nelson just sounds like an old pro happy to play with whoever is in the studio, happy to sing whatever the producer puts in front of him -- and that's what makes Country Music not all that different from Songbird or Countryman, which were also driven by their respective producers to places that don't seem as classically country as this purports to be. ---Stephen Thomas Erlewine, AllMusic Review

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