



BUDDY GREENE – HAPPY MAN [January 2008 issue]
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Buddy Greene wanted to call this album "Son Of Rufus" or "Rufus Rides Again," as a follow up to his "RUFUS" release. Instead, he chose one of the track titles, "HAPPY MAN." It was a good choice. This happy man creates happy music and happy listeners.

"HAPPY MAN" is exuberant, rollicking, thoughtful, and fun. Greene has enlisted the talents of a dozen or so Nashville super-pickers, but it's his whimsical harmonica, solid guitar work (both flat and fingerpicked), and playfully serious vocals that maintain continuity throughout the album, leaving no doubt that this is a Buddy Greene project.

These 15 tracks cover a wealth of genres. Most songs will be familiar, but with the Rufus treatment, they're reborn. Traditional songs like "Darlin' Corey" and "Kemo Kimo" sound as fresh as a mountain breeze. Dancing in the kitchen is definitely appropriate. Then there are the gospel songs. "Talk About Sufferin'" sets a solemn tone with an intro of bowed bass, underscoring a life of sorrow and trouble, but other spirituals are filled with African-American rhythm, hand-clapping joy, and a simple, honest desire to live a good life and go to heaven. "Wrasslin' Jacob," "Rise From The Ruins," and "Walkin' In Jerusalem" get your blood flowing and your feet stomping with the spirit of love and hope. Piano, accordion, and drums add to the "Jerusalem" arrangement in a positive way.

Now roll up the rugs, put on your happy shoes and dance to the title track, a Cajun ditty by Greene. "Road To Lisdoonvarna"/"Garryowen" is a familiar Celtic instrumental with the bodhran, cittern, and hurdy gurdy adding to the old-country atmosphere. Two entries from the folk world are also included. "Last Thing On My Mind" is a familiar lesson we all learned in the sixties, while "She Belongs To Me" is a Bob Dylan tune that gets better with each decade.

The only track not sung by Greene is pure country fun. "You Took All The Ramblin' Out of Me" is a Jerry Reed tune, and Reed has a blast with his lyrics. And yes, even bluegrass has its share of disc space. "Wheel Hoss" and "Little Rabbit" offer some hot picking and mountain rhythms, blended with hambone and harmonica, making for a thoroughly enjoyable and well-balanced musical project.

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