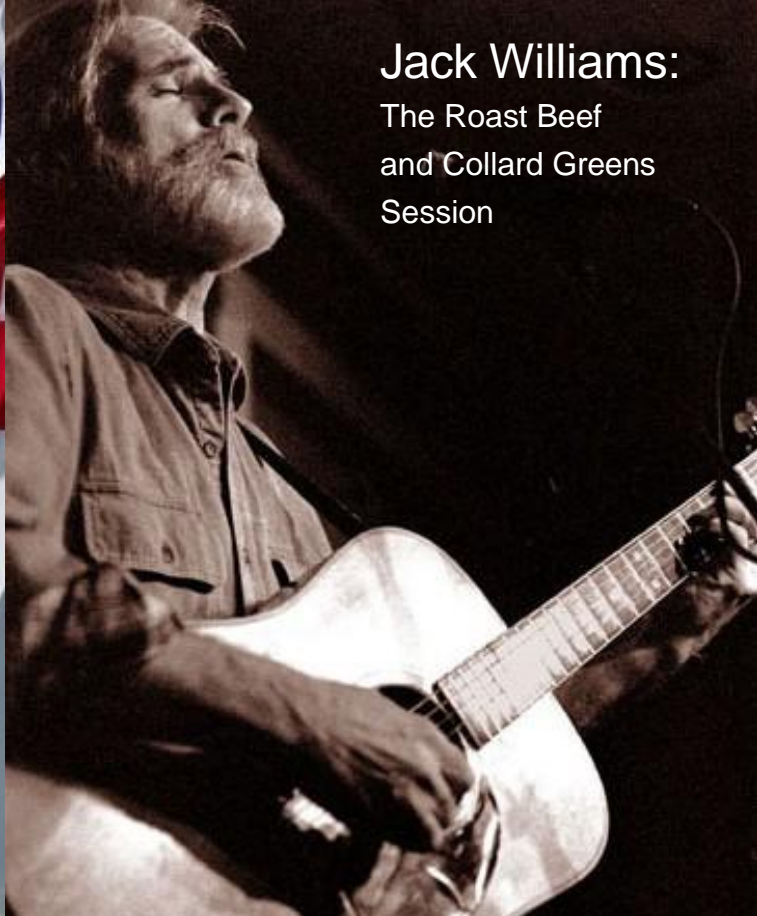


Jack Williams:
The Roast Beef
and Collard Greens
Session



Live at the Greys

Brighton

This recording is an 'official bootleg' capturing American songwriter Jack Williams live in England at the Greys, Brighton. As Jack walked up onto the Grey's tiny stage, Ragamuffin Brian fumbled in his bag for his trusty Sony Minidisc. Brian laid the big microphone across the table in front of the man from Lancaster, South Carolina. What my friend has captured is a sparkling recording which puts you right there with us on that Winter's evening the last time Jack Williams was in town.

Jack Williams spends his life on the road traversing the highways and backroads of North America appearing at coffee houses, house concerts and festivals. The miles he clocks up is as staggering as the poetry of his performances. I can count the great guitarists, the poets rather than technicians, that I have heard over my fifty summers on the fingers of one hand. I count Jack Williams on that first hand.

What makes Jack Williams special is his ability to never let his guitar virtuosity overshadow his songs. Guitar, words and man are one in spirit. The man's inherent belief in melody stems I would suggest from his upbringing. Jack's mother had a love of music from classical to jazz, blues and rock'n'roll. The beauty of Southern Gospel choirs run deep in his veins like a new coat of lacquer seeping into wood. Listen to Jack sing Mama Lou to know how much love and music he grew up with.

Jack Williams studied jazz trumpet and classical music at University. His band, backed everyone from John Lee Hooker, the Staple Singers to Big Joe Turner when they played the fraternity dances. You can hear all these influences and more here. In the sanitized strip mall values of the 21st Century Jack Williams blows the cobwebs off the ancient art of storytelling. Jack can tell a story and spin a song as though Blind Willie McTell and Shakespeare were blood brothers. In fact they are, as Duke Ellington once said "I think Lady MacBeth had some ragtime in her soul."

Jack Williams is also blood brother to the rich literary tradition of South Carolina writers James Dickey (Deliverance) and Pat Conroy (Prince of Tides). His tribute to the late James Dickey, The Old Buckdancer Is Gone is a corker. Jack Williams South Carolina songs are, for me, like chapters from Pat Conroy's epic tale.

Although South Carolina are the roots of Jack's childhood, his father's Army career meant travelling from base to base and overseas. He continues his restless journey bringing music to communities, and indulging in another passion, bird watching, where ever he goes.

When Jack visited my diamond Wight Island I took him for a walk on Tennyson Down where the poet penned Charge of the Light Brigade. The walk recalled a very personal song from Jack that he had written about the attack on the twin towers in New York on September 11th, 2001. It says more to me than the endless reruns from CNN because it speaks so profoundly from the heart.

In my world, the poet's figure higher than royalty. What they provide, for me, in little bars like Mike Lance's legendary Grey's is akin to an audience with the Pope for some. Like Jack I'm a country boy too, one deeply rooted by my upbringing.

In my fourteenth summer Mr. Sewell gave us a lesson. He wrote the words HISTORY on the blackboard. Then he covered over TORY and switched to cover over HI. He said something very profound to me: "His Story isn't dry books it is the tales of people. Discover your history by going home and asking your Grandparents about their lives and learn from them."

When I sit and listen to Jack Williams I get more history, more life, more laughs than a library full of leather armed academics could ever satisfy. Listen to Jack give a veritable history of music in I Love My Music and My Woman (and that's all). Listen to him celebrate the joy of song throughout this recording.

I recommend finding the albums from the Jack Williams website (www.jackwilliamsmusic.com) Then seek out Jack's work with another neglected giant of American music Mickey Newbury. If you bought this at a Jack Williams concert you'll know exactly what I mean. If not make amends first chance you get.

As for Jack I bet as I write that he's out there on the road tonight "scanning the sky for one last rhyme". Bless ya Jack.

Limey Mike, January 29th, 2004

"Art washes the dust of everyday life from the soul." - Picasso
ps: and bless the skill and heart of Ragamuffin Brian at the recording desk . . .

Playlist:

1. A Natural Man
2. Across The Winterline
3. Home Town Boy
4. The Old Buckdancers Gone
5. Thirsty Town
6. Asphalt Blues
7. Blow Me Down Again
8. This Is My Body
9. Mama Lou
10. The Walls Came Tumbling Down
11. This Moment Is Mine
12. Walkin' Dreams
13. Oh Carol
14. I Love My Music & My Woman
(Medley)
15. Why You Been Gone So Long