Eric Bibb and JJ Milteau - Lead Belly's Gold (2015)

1 Grey Goose 5:30 2 When That Train Comes Along / Swing Low, Sweet Chariot 3:58 3 On A Monday 2:54 4 The House Of The Rising Sun 3:29 5 Midnight Special 3:58 6 Bring A Little Water, Sylvie 3:17 7 Where Did You Sleep Last Night 3:28 8 When I Get To Dallas 1:42 9 Pick A Bale Of Cotton 2:57 10 Goodnight, Irene 3:39 11 Rock Island Line 3:54 12 Bourgeois Blues 3:20 13 Chauffeur Blues 2:52 14 Stewball 3:29 15 Titanic 3:03 16 Swimmin' In A River Of Songs 3:23 Backing Vocals – Big Daddy Wilson (tracks: 2, 3, 9, 14), Michael Robinson (tracks: 3, 14) Bass – Gilles Michels (tracks: 5, 11) Drums, Bass, Electric Piano [Wurlitzer] – Glen Scott (tracks: 16) Drums, Percussion – Larry Crockett Harmonica – J.J. Milteau Twelve-String Guitar, Mandolin – Michael Jerome Browne (tracks: 16) Vocals, Guitar – Eric Bibb

When he was discovered in Louisiana's infamous Angola prison farm back in 1933, little did Lead Belly know that his music would alter the course of his destiny and change the life of the architects of his success, famed folklorists John and Alan Lomax. More to the point, there was no way Lead Belly could have realized that he would become the most famous Black folksinger ever, bringing the attention of millions to the power of the African-American song, well outside the boundaries of his own community, as artists as diverse as Nirvana, Frank Sinatra, the Beach Boys, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Tom Waits or Bob Dylan embraced his repertoire.

Huddie Ledbetter—Lead Belly's real name—owes this extraordinary status to his uncanny talent for bridging gaps. Born in the Deep South in the late 1880s, he was a living link between the end of slavery and the height of the sharecrop system that literally disenfranchised African-Americans during the first half of the 20th Century; between the false hopes engendered by the Emancipation Proclamation and the despair spawned by Segregation; between the era of the itinerant songsters and the rise of the blues troubadours, at the time when he was making his apprenticeship as a teenage street musician. In the process, Lead Belly launched almost by himself the folk boom that took by storm the white New York literati, and familiarized Europeans with the blues, triggering a revival that eventually brought about rock music through the likes of

the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. Although it is not widely known, he was also the very first rural blues artist to grace Europeans stages in 1949, shortly before his death at the age of 61.

By paying homage to Lead Belly on these live and studio renditions of the old master's gold songs, blues great Eric Bibb and prolific harmonica player Jean-Jacques Milteau give us much more than a celebration of the folksinger's rich musical heritage. Establishing a living link between the New World and the Old Continent, they showcase the universality and timelessness of Lead Belly's message. It is no accident that this recording kicks off with "Grey Goose," a poetic depiction of social ostracism that finds an echo today with the African and Middle-Eastern migrants who cross the Mediterranean by the thousands on makeshift rafts. The same could be said of the prison song "Midnight Special," still valid today when African-American males make up 40% of inmates in the US when they represent a mere 13% of the American population, of "The Titanic" with its clear reference to racism that rings appallingly true in the wake of Charleston and Ferguson.

Yet, the most topical songs of all might well be "Bourgeois Blues." An open denunciation of the color caste system that prevailed in the nation's capital when Lead Belly recorded it in 1938, it proves that the presence of a Black president in the White House hasn't really turned the tables in a world of discrimination that's always prompt to oppress the poor and the voiceless.

Spicing up Lead Belly's repertoire with a handful of their own compositions, Eric and JJ pick up where the original songster left off, addressing everyday issues with a freshness, candor and poetic sense that contribute to the circulation of a message of peace, hope, tolerance, and non-violence. As a result, their rare musical understanding makes Lead Belly's Gold one of the most exciting recordings of their respective careers. ---ericbibb.com

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