Dwight Yoakam - Hillbilly Deluxe (1987)

Side One *01 - Little Ways. 02 - Smoke Along The Track. 03 - Johnson's Love. 04 - Please, Please Baby. 05 - Readin', Rightin', Rt. 23.* Side Two *01 - Always Late With Your Kisses. 02 - 1 000 Miles. 03 - Throughout All Time. 04 - Little Sister. 05 - This Drinkin' Will Kill Me.* Musicians: Dwight Yoakam - Guitar (Acoustic), Vocals Pete Anderson - 6-String Bass, Guitar (Electric), Vocals (Background) Tom Brumley - Pedal Steel, Vocals (Background) Jeff Donavan - Drums Skip Edwards - Piano J.D. Foster - Bass (Electric) Brantley Kearns - Fiddle, Vocals (Background) Greg Leisz - Lap Steel Guitar Herb Pedersen - Vocals (Background) Dusty Wakeman - Vocals (Background)

Hillbilly Deluxe proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that Dwight Yoakam's Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc. was no fluke. There's no sophomore slump here, and while Hillbilly Deluxe may be seen as an extension of his debut, repetition 'taint necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it can be heard and viewed as Yokam and producer/guitarist Pete Anderson cementing the commitment to Bakersfield-styled honky tonk music. Yoakam's voice is a dead cross of Merle Haggard's early voice and Lefty Frizzell's -- a fine cover of the latter's "Always Late (With Your Kisses)" is included here -- and as such, it is one of the purest, most soulful voices in the music of this era. But as displayed on his debut, Yoakam is one hell of a songwriter as well. Cuts like "Little Ways," the album's first single, "Readin' Writin," "Rt. 23," and the amazing "Throughout All Time," with its dancing fiddles and lap steel guitars entwined with Anderson's lead, are worthy of serious consideration as among the finest country songs written in the preceding five years. An added bonus is a killer version of Doc Pomus's classic "Little Sister" that rivals Elvis Presley's -- yeah, that's right -- and blows Ry Cooder's tepid cover of it away. The only other cover here is the classic "Smoke Along the Track" by Alan Rose and Dan Helms, and in true hardcore troubadour fashion, Yoakam makes it his own, swinging it in the best Johnny Cash and Tennessee Three fashion rhythmically and with Haggard's winsome railroad vocal that he took from Jimmie Rodgers. While there can be no doubt about Yoakam's "hillbilly" roots in Kentucky, this disc is deluxe in virtually every way. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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