

Watermelon Slim and the Workers: "Bull Goose Rooster" (Northern Blues Music) -- Blues singers have traditionally been good at capturing the everyday struggles of the common man, but when it's come to political music, that's usually been left to the bluesman's acoustic cousin, the folk singer. Watermelon Slim is the rare bluesman with a point of view – and on "Bull Goose Rooster," he clearly states his support for worker's rights and for the little guy who blows the whistle on corruption and injustice. It's in the liner notes and it's in the music, where Slim has his share of topical material. Most obviously, he takes on the whistle blower's cause with the song "A Wrench In The Machine." But there's a similar sentiment behind his cover of Woody Guthrie's "Vigilante Man." As its title suggests, "The Foreign Policy Blues" gets in its shots about the impact of recent foreign policies. Slim's words are far from the only thing worth hearing here. His rough and at times raucous brand of blues draws from the raw sounds of the Mississippi Hill Country region (which spawned the likes of Junior Kimbrough and R. L. Burnside), as well as country and bluegrass. His sound is especially gritty and hard-hitting on rockers like the title track, the aforementioned "A Wrench In The Machine" and "I Ain't Whistling Dixie." In some ways, Slim has much in common with bands like Rage Against The Machine or Anti-Flag, which shook up the rock world with their politically charged music. Slim won't sell records like Rage did, but "Bull Goose Rooster" is the kind of provocative (and rocking album) that's welcome in an age with far too much light and disposable music. – Alan Sculley – Rating: 3 stars