

# No Depression

## Reconstruction Review

May-June 2007

Probably too smart by half for his own damn good, William & Mary alum Scott Miller has straddled the cerebral and the visceral since at least his days with the Knoxville-based V-Roys. But while there doubtless are some "early-stuff-is-best" doorknobs who'll steadfastly insist he cut his peak work with that fine alt-pop outfit, the Virginia native since has taken his game to a punchier, more original and honest level with his rotating posse of rockin' rogues, the Commonwealth.

Recorded live over 3 nights in December 2006 at the Down Home in Johnson City, Tennessee, Reconstruction collects seventeen Miller-penned tunes plus heady covers of Tom Petty's "Spike" and Neil Young's "Hawks & Doves." The scatter-pattern of the originals demonstrates a healthy vitality to Miller's songwriting output – there's the V-Roy's gorgeous "Arianne", four each from the Commonwealth's 2001 and 2003 albums, a half-dozen from last year's sublime Citation, and three new gems (Eight Miles Per Gallon, Still People Are Moving and Drunk All Around This Town).

Miller's rugged everyman voice is just the ticket for these inspired romps, and RS Field's production fairly crackles with raw immediacy. (It speaks volumes of Miller's rockyrill cred/instincts that his records have been produced by a veritable Eccentric Rock Varmint Hall of Fame, including Field, Steve Earle and Jim Dickinson.)

Altogether this is exemplary (and rare) populist music: smart, funny, and nearly devoid of mythic pretense.