

# NO DEPRESSION

COLUMN

Through the Lens

## Lucinda Williams, Gregg Allman, Woody Guthrie Tribute, and Other New Roots Music Releases

AMOS PERRINE

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Lucinda Williams at the Doheny Blues Festival. Photograph by John Hancock

### Lucinda Williams – *This Sweet Old World* (September 29)

I ALWAYS THOUGHT *SWEET OLD World* never got enough love. While the critics took to it, the newly minted alt-country crowd not so much. Did they want Volume 2 of the *Rough Trade* album? Was it too well done? Too introspective? More likely it took them another six years to catch up when *Car Wheels* was released.

Listening to the original, you could almost call it a "folk" album, even though it's electric throughout, but more for its tone and tenor. *This Sweet Old World*, on the other hand, has a rocking "blues" sound that Williams has been perfecting these past few years, recorded with her touring band, adding only frequent guest Greg Leisz. I think she looked back at the songs, knowing they did not get their due respect then, and just re-did them. Williams has always been an instinctual artist, and that instinct has been always been on the mark even if it ticked off some folks. During the past few years, I have come to see her as an artist who is more consciously aware – aware of that instinct and aware of how to put it to even better use. That has, to my mind, deepened and enriched her music, and it was pretty darn deep to begin with.

This is not however, the first time she "re-recorded" *TSOW*. Ten years ago she did live versions in New York and LA that were included in a live ten-CD set. But, obviously, this one is different. *TSOW* is not a one-off, but rather well thought out, well done by all, and essential in understanding and appreciating Williams, her life, and her music. She includes four other songs she had been doing at the time, and re-writes and renames "He Never Got Enough Love." Having just seen Robert Christgau, who was the first major critic to embrace Williams in 1988, I'll repeat his summation in the *Village Voice* review back then, "A+."