

## MORE THAN SARCASM

Chuck Brodsky's humor got him noticed, but it's his songwriting that now resonates

With songs such as "Blow 'em Away," "No More Mr. Nice Guy," and "Talk to My Lawyer," Chuck Brodsky initially attracted attention for his biting sarcasm. When he makes his debut Friday at the Blue Door, 2805 N. McKinley, he undoubtedly will show much more diversity as he plays songs from his latest album, "Last of the Old Time," a brilliant look back into a slice of America that is gone but certainly not forgotten. Such songs as "Gone to Heaven" and "Boys in the Back Room" are only two examples of his brilliant storytelling skills, and an evening with Brodsky gives rise to a grab bag of songs that run deep across American roots.

Heir to the Woody Guthrie/early Bob Dylan tradition, Brodsky is a former fruit picker who not only writes about the concerns of working people but has lived with those same concerns for years. His songs of social conscience put many a politically correct folkie to shame, as he echoes Guthrie's words "You can only write what you see" every time he writes a song.

And what tales this singer-songwriter from Philadelphia has, full of insight and good humor and intelligence that make you feel every character he brings to life. With arresting songwriting, groove-oriented guitar playing and a soulful, compassionate voice, Brodsky quickly became a fixture on the national acoustic music scene. A recent review described him as "a genuine troubadour with no soap box, no urban boho contentions and a few axes to grind," adding that "Brodsky picks with the best of the Woody and Ramblin' Jack descendants."

In 1992, Brodsky won the Emerging Songwriter Award at the Napa Valley Folk Festival in California. His debut CD, "A Fingerpainter's Murals," released in 1995, was a critical favorite with its collection of vividly rendered stories ranging from a farmer losing his land ("Acre by Acre") to a once-great pitcher trying to hold on a little longer ("Lefty").

But the song that cemented Brodsky's reputation as a funny and trenchant songwriter was "Blow 'em Away", a delightfully nasty blues tune about a pistol-packing commuter. The radio

tip sheet The Maverick Report named it Song of the Year, and the song made its way onto a number of compilation albums, including Dr. Demento's "Basement Tapes." Singer-songwriter David Wilcox also made the song one of his concert staples and recorded it on his 1996 live album, "East Asheville Hardware."

Other albums followed, such as "Letters In the Dirt" in 1996 and "Radio" in 1998, both filled with a charming knack for chronicling the foibles of American culture and human relationships. Brodsky suggests John Prine and Loudon Wainwright III in his wiry, winking delivery and subject matter. There's ample variety in the Americana musical touches on his albums, featuring dobro, electric piano and organ and a full-out bar-band groove in places.

But Brodsky might be at his best up close with just his voice and an acoustic guitar and songs that you remember more than most of the modern folk fare. His songs are only occasionally revelatory in a manner that distinguishes him from his coffee-house peers, but his strong suit is his humor. Those drawn to the lighter side of Americana will find favor with Brodsky's wry stage presence.

Door open at 7p.m. for the 8p.m. show. Call 524-0378 for more information.