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Review of Two Sets

by **Alicia McAuley**

With his new 2-Disc live album, *Two Sets*, Chuck Brodsky proves that he is a man of many talents. He is a skilled guitarist, a poet, and a stand-up comedian. But perhaps most importantly, he is a gifted storyteller who is able to transform ordinary life experiences into great musical events.

Armed with an acoustic guitar, Brodsky charms audiences from the US to Ireland with witty spoken intros and colourful lyrics. Accompanied by Don Porterfield (fretless bass, harmony vocals), Brodsky introduces listeners to a whole cast of characters from baseball heroes to migrant fruit pickers.

Set One begins with the up-tempo "He Came to Our Town," and then slows for the ballad of "Bill and Annie." This set also includes the song "Radio," which was featured in the 2003 movie of the same name, and details the remarkable life of a developmentally delayed man who was embraced by his community in South Carolina.

Set Two really showcases Brodsky's humorous side. From "Talk to My Lawyer," a tongue-in-cheek look at a sue-happy society, to memories of his Jewish upbringing in "On Christmas I Got Nothing," it's no surprise that there is a lot of laughter from the crowd during this set.

There are three songs on this double live that are particularly noteworthy. The first is "Dangerous Times," a politically-charged offering that is similar to the anti-war folk songs of the past. Second is "The 9:30 Pint," an energetic, catchy ode to an Irish barman. Third, and perhaps the most powerful song of the album, is the previously un-released "Lili's Braids." This sad, moody track is a heartbreaking account of the treatment of the Jews at the hands of the Nazis during World War II.

Brodsky's classic American folk style is reminiscent of great artists like Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie, whom he lists as two of his musical influences. In these dismal days of war and Wall Street crashes, Brodsky's tales of hope and grace offer a refreshing look at the simpler side of life in America.

Two Sets is Brodsky's eighth album and was released in July, 2008.