



Mark Elliott,
American Road
(Cub Creek, 2004)

This excellent album opens with the title track, "American Road," which is a driving beat song about the journey through America from the eyes of an Ellis Island arrivee.

Mark Elliott slows matters down to a lovely ballad with "Ride Out of Reno." Again, the ghost of history haunts the lyrics as he recalls the railroad and how many ancestors of those who ride the rails actually helped lay the tracks.

There is a feeling of authenticity about the writing and delivery on these tracks. "Message in a Bottle" is a sad reminder that all messages in bottles are not notes from distant lands. Here the message is the usual contents of the bottle. This is a well-crafted piece of writing.

Another song that will get deep into your heart and mind is "Private in Patton's Army." We are so used to hearing songs about the effects of war on veterans of Vietnam or the Great War that we too often forget the longterm victims of World War II. More recent and more domestic history is recalled on the marvelous retelling of a '60s childhood on "Baseball & the Beatles." If you are of a certain age this song will bring back the memories. Go on, be a teenager again.

From the light-hearted he brings us face to face with grim reality on "Old Berle Jones." We can all too often look through rose-coloured glasses at the people in the rural hills, but life was hard and despite their music and resilience they were cruelly used by big business, especially the men who worked the mines.

The writing skill of Elliott is to the fore when he weaves tales around a man imagining the former owners of a second-hand jacket on "The Jacket." One of my favourite tracks is "Old Dogs," which reminds us how hard we can often be on our loved ones.

This is a collection of excellent songs that will be an asset to any record collection, and with a little luck and a lot of justice they should become much better known.

by [Nicky Rossiter](#)
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