

ear candy

ALBUM REVIEWS

THE ATHENS BLUR MAGAZINE

ISSUE 13 - JAN. 15, 2010



Big Kenny

*The Quiet Times
of a Rock and Roll
Farmboy*

I know what you're thinking. The second half of a mega-popular duo act releases his own solo album after his former cohort, John Rich. It has "Andrew Ridgeley" written all over it, complete with a trademark top hat.

But Big Kenny manages to dodge that "duo-gone-solo" curse. Is he the best vocalist in Nashville? No, and he seems okay with it, and since he's one of the best songwriters working, we're okay with it, too. With *Quiet Time*, Big Kenny gained freedom to create without the restrictions of label suits who prodded him for more polished, commercial "Big and Rich" tracks that made them, well, big and rich.

Not coincidentally, the song "Free Like Me" begins, "*When I'm in these walls/I'll say anything I want.*" Bucking the norm, Big Kenny enlists the Canadian Blackfoot Confederacy to open "Wake Up," a song not necessarily about Native Americans but having a melody that apparently lends itself well to tribal chants. "Go Your Own Way" is a ballad chock-full of minor chords and a full orchestral string section for backup. Not your typical Nashville fare. "Long After I'm Gone" is already a commercial hit, and I'd bet a few more songs on here will be, as well.

Big Kenny reaffirms that an artist can go solo because he/she actually *has* something to say rather than just wanting to be heard. Hats off!

— Phil Pyle