

VINTAGE GUITAR

ERIC BRACE AND PETER COOPER

"You Don't Have to Like Them Both"

Despite this disc's semi-apologetic title, Eric Brace and Peter Cooper should feel no shame about this release. Cooper says the goal in making 'You Don't Have To Like Them Both' was to create "a portrait of friendship and song." so the original songs, including Cooper's "The Man Who Loves to Hate," are joined by tracks written by Kris Kristofferson, Todd Snider, Jim Lauderdale, David Olney, Paul Kennerley, and Karl Straub to form a remarkably cohesive mood.

The music resides in the space between folk and country. It's tight and catchy without being slick or overly commercial; perhaps the term "back-porch country" best describes the mood. Even on the darker numbers, such as the traditional tune, "Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still," the overall disposition is comfortably upbeat. With the legendary Lloyd Green on pedal-steel guitar, Richard Bennett, Tim Carroll, and Kenny Vaughan on guitars, and Tim O'Brien on banjo, bouzouki, mandolin, and octave mandolin, the picking on 'You Don't Have To Like Them Both,' is first-class. Production is warm and natural, including a bit of amplifier hum on a couple of cuts.

If you like music that doesn't need to be glossy to deliver its message with impact, then 'You Don't Have To Like Them Both' should be part of your next musical meal.

-- Steven Stone