

## LUKA BLOOM

Turf

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PERFORMANCE **7/8** SOUND QUALITY

It's been a strange path for singer/songwriter Luka Bloom: a debut album too frantic for its own good, a second album with a winning, off-kilter cover of L.L. Cool J's "I Need Love," and now a third that pares down the presentation to simply the singer and his guitar. The result is his most melodic and emotionally satisfying CD yet.

Bloom isn't a great songwriter—there isn't much here for others to record—but he's a terrific performer and the weaker moments are carried along by his passion.

Things work best early in the set. The opener, "Cold Comfort," quickly sets the tone with

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its tale of a musician stuck in New York on a freezing night when his lover is far away. Forceful but quiet, it's followed by several more winners: "True Blue," "To Begin To," and Mike Scott's beguiling "Sunny Sailor Boy."

Later tracks are more political and less convincing. "Freedom Song" prosaically links the struggle of Rosa Parks with other movements around the world, and "I Did Time" is a flat, unremarkable depiction of a man released from prison. Nonetheless, the intimate mood Bloom sets from the beginning doesn't flag. He's only a step away from delivering a truly great album.

—Michael Giltz