

# SOUNDS GOOD

## *Recordings of special interest to listeners in western Illinois.*

West central Illinois wears many faces. We see some in the stares or bigger cities like Galesburg and Quincy or in the glances of county seats like Macomb and Carthage. Then there are the hidden faces: those peering down long-forgotten county gravel roads. These are the faces revealed in "Best of All Possible Worlds," a collection of a dozen songs from Rushville singer-songwriter Chris Vallillo.

Chris is one of those artists able to look at an object and see its wider importance, all the while remaining keenly in tune with the heritage of the region. A few years back, Vallillo attended an exhibit at the Dickson Mounds Museum in Lewiston which featured the work of Jean Mariette (from LaHarpe, formerly of Canton). While there, he saw a picture of a piano; his response to the photo resulted in "Babylon Bend." The song tells of the gatherings where the piano was played and of the lovers who danced to its melodies. Edgar Lee Masters would have been proud.

Vallillo's music carries the influences of the folk era of the late 1960's and early 1970's. At times he evokes Gordon Lightfoot (as in "Walnut Fiddle"), at times, Steve Goodman or a less-commercial Dan Fogelberg. The producer of the CD is Rich Adler, noted for his work with John Hartford, John Prine, and other bearing styles similar to Vallillo's. But this music is vintage western Illinois.

You'll be familiar with the themes of the ten original songs in the collection, among them: sweltering summer days, helping neighbors during harvest, old buildings that tell the stories of generations. Chris Vallillo captures a bygone era as only a good troubadour can. And after hearing his music, you might even want to go for a ride on a Sunday afternoon to see some of the places he writes about (most of which are probably just an hour or so from where you live). "Old Building," for example, is about the old Center Schoolhouse, just off-route 24 between Rushville and Beardstown. Even the photos on the CD jacket, including some excellent work by Tim Schroll of Colchester, capture the local flavor.

There's some good pickin' here, too, as a host of talented Nashville musicians were selected to accompany the solo guitarist. Ronnie Godfrey (the Marshall Tucker Band) plays piano, Andrea Zonn (who back Lyle Lovett) take fiddle and viola, Ron Huskey, Jr. plays bass (mostly stand-up), and David Schnauffer chimes in on mountain dulcimer. Schnauffer was also feature this year on Rural Route 3, the public radio program Vallillo hosts from Western Illinois University.

"Best of All Possible Worlds" is available through mail and online at [www.ginridge.com](http://www.ginridge.com). The mailing address is Gin Ridge Records, P.O. Box 144, Rushville, IL 62681. While bordering on melancholy at times, it still would serve well as a uniquely western Illinois gift.

