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Artist: Eileen Bernstein
CD: The Wind is Gone
Hometown: Columbia, Maryland
Genre: Country

Eileen Bernstein would make a great performer at a spiritual retreat or self-empowerment seminar. Her songs, whether sad or upbeat, come from a place of lessons learned. We get songs about what really matters in life ("Searchin' for Cloud Nine"), feeding the spirit as well as the body ("Daily Requirements"), and life assessment at age 30 ("Spring Cleaning").

The whole time I was listening, I couldn't help comparing her to North Carolina's Jamie Anderson, who's also been featured on this site. Same spunkiness and bluntly-stated lyrics, same dry and often self-effacing humor. While Anderson comes from more of a folk music place, Bernstein is pure country rock with a twang to match.

I kept jotting down lyrics that jumped out at me. She's living life "somewhere between reality and [her] dreams." When looking for what's real and natural in life, she's "going to the country to drink a glass of rain." I'm not surprised she won a 2004 Song of the Year award. She does make quite an impression.

She sounds like she's having the most fun in honky-tonk stompers like "Spring Cleaning," and that's where she really shines. The ballads can be a little heavy, and her voice works best when she's not reaching for notes, but these are minor complaints. She also shines when she's experimenting with sound, such as the lush piano work on the title track. These songs may have a common theme, but they don't sound the same.

If you care to disagree, she'll go ahead and put you in your place with "Get a Life," a great opener. Trust me, this is not a woman to trifle with.

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