BIG BLUES REVIEWS



MICHAEL MCDERMOTT
FLOWERS FROM THE GRAVEYARD

Pauper Sky Records

Michael McDermott is possibly one of the finest singer-songwriters working today. An American with bags of attitude, each album he releases is invariably packed to bursting with marvellous melodies, driving, commanding riffs and insightful, at times blistering lyricism. I confess to being a huge fan of this guy and his music. For around ten years I've been continually delighted to hear his latest creations and openly marvel at his pure genius. He is an outstanding King of modern Americana, but always imbued with a rock and

> ***"an outstanding King of modern Americana"***

even blues edge that encapsulates his towering class as he glides from electric to acoustic picking, backed by some of Nashville's greats like Will Kimbrough and John Deaderick. This is a man who deals in heartbreak, heartache, lust and love and the odd foray into the political world around him. With eleven tracks here to choose from, try 'The Future' for a hint at modern US political life, or The Best We Get with its heady hints of Tom Petty and Del Amitri – this is big chords, big hooks and bigger talent laid bare. Miss it at your peril.

IAIN PATIENCE





EXPLORE

BAP KENNEDY
ABOVE ALL, LOVE

Lonely Street Discs

OK I have to come clean here and say that I have not been aware of Bap as a solo artist and have only vague memories of his former band Energy Orchard. So, as a result, I feel that, with no baggage or preconceptions, I can come to the review of these unreleased cuts from Bap some ten years since his passing from cancer with fresh ears. Before listening, I had a notion that these ten songs would be basically rough outlines and really demo quality but how wrong I was. Indeed, the complete opposite is the case as all are fully formed and produced to a high standard. Production is all well and good but the real standout here is the true quality of the songwriting. It is very good. The title track opens the album up and it is pure Nashville but with a little Proclaimers Sunshine On Leith sprinkled in there. Bap's vocals throughout the album are engaging, clear and heartfelt. Don't Be Like That mixes late forties big band, early Rock and Doo-wop very cleverly. Old Majestic Moon is straight out of Neil Young's top drawer. Red Moon again could have come from any top writer you can think of. However, that does not imply a lack of originality, quite the reverse, as it is a salute to a writer of clarity and succinctness able to distil his thoughts clearly and melodically. My one difficulty is that, in my opinion, this fails to be a Blues album in sound and lyrical content as such. However, if you are a true music lover ignore this "deficiency" and simply buy this album and revel in the wonderful top-notch writing from a lost Belfast lad. You'll not be disappointed.

GRAEME SCOTT

BLIND DOG MAYER
LIVE STUDIO SESSION- FROM THE SHADOW OF THE CASTLE

Blues Note Records

I have to say that Blind Dog Mayer is a new band that has recently come across my radar. Originating from Germany, this four-piece band has produced a six-track EP, consisting of original material, penned by the band themselves. Anthem Of The Lost Sock is not a song title that you could easily forget, but this opening track hits you like a bolt of lightning. Leaning towards the rockier side of the Blues, it certainly packs a punch. It did put me in mind ever so slightly of early ZZ Top. Blind Dog Mayer is the lead vocalist, and he is also very adept at the harmonica. Dirk Lenz plays a mean guitar with raunchy riffs that create a harmony alongside the vocals. As I listened to the songs, one thought did pop into my head: these guys would grace any Festival line-up. Harley Rider is perhaps the Bluesiest song on the EP, especially with the haunting harmonica courtesy of Blind Dog. So, all in all, a brilliant band, great EP, and I, for one, am looking forward to a full album in the not-too-distant future.

STEPHEN HARRISON

BOBBY DAY
ROCKIN' ROBERT

Acrobat Music

Bobby Day was a smooth gospel, jazz and blues singer that emerged in the 1950's and 1960's, giving a softer side to the music that was popular at



MISTY BLUES BAND
STILL TICKING



Guitar One Records

There is a particular kind of musical confidence that comes only with experience: the ability to stretch without losing the plot, experiment without sacrificing soul, and make complexity sound effortless. Still Ticking, the latest release from Misty Blues, has that quality in abundance. The band's eighteenth album finds them continuing to explore the fertile ground where blues, R&B, funk, jazz and roots music collide, with Gina Coleman's commanding vocals providing the emotional centre of gravity. Battle Cry immediately sets the standard, a richly layered, expansive performance that reveals something new with every listen. The arrangement is sophisticated without becoming overworked, while the vocal interplay adds further depth to a song that carries both urgency and grandeur. Elsewhere, Passion captures the band's ability to combine groove and atmosphere, its soulful momentum showcasing a group

> ***a richly rewarding addition to an already impressive catalogue***

entirely comfortable in its own musical skin. The funky toned Trifling Man. is another highlight, with Coleman sharing vocal duties with Lady Bianca in a spirited performance that crackles with personality and controlled intensity. Their voices complement and challenge each other beautifully, creating one of the album's most memorable moments. What makes this latest release so compelling is the sense that Misty Blues are still pushing forward. There is no complacency here, only a seasoned band continuing to refine its distinctive sound. Adventurous yet grounded, soulful yet stylistically broad, this is a confident and richly rewarding addition to an already impressive catalogue, and proof that Misty Blues are, indeed, still ticking.

COLIN CAMPBELL



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