

Bob Margolin – Down In The Alley (1993)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Boogie At Midnight* - 4:51 02. *Brown Liquor* - 3:49 03. *Tough Times* - 2:56 04. *While You're Down There* - 3:25 05. *Down In The Alley* - 4:15 [play](#) 06. *Boston Driving Blues* - 5:39 07. *Lonesome Bedroom Blues* - 4:52 08. *Baby Can't Be Found* - 2:31 09. *Big Tree Blues* - 3:23 10. *Twelve Year Old Boy* - 4:04 11. *Dream Of Nothing* - 3:28 12. *Look What You Done* - 2:47 13. *Wee Wee Hours* - 4:17

[play](#)

14. *Now Who's The Fool* - 3:29 15. *Worried Life Blues* - 5:16

Personnel: Bob Margolin (vocals, guitar); Terry Harris, John Brim, Nappy Brown (vocals); Ronnie Earl (guitar); Tom Brill (harp, harmonica, upright bass, bass guitar); Kaz Kazanoff, Mark "Kaz" Kazanoff (saxophone); David Maxwell (piano); Jim Brock (drums, percussion); Chuck Cotton, Wes Johnson, Per Hanson (drums); Mike Avery (tom tom, percussion).

On *Down in the Alley*, his first album for Alligator Records, *Steady Rollin'* Bob Margolin doesn't quite follow though on the success of its predecessor *Chicago Blues*, yet that's only a relative scale. Margolin is one of a handful of musicians to keep classic Chicago blues alive in the '90s, both through covers and original material. His association with Muddy Waters is, if anything, overhyped by journalists and Alligator alike, but it has to be said that he does Muddy proud with down-and-dirty recordings like this. Margolin's guitar has true muscle, and there's genuine grit to the recording, unlike many contemporary Chicago blues albums. For some tastes, the album may be a little predictable since he never breaks from the tradition, but anyone looking for a straight-ahead slice of electric blues like Chess used to make them should be pleased with *Down in the Alley*. ---Stephen Thomas Erlewine

In 1948, young Muddy Waters recorded a 78 for Chicago's Aristocrat Records. It was the shot

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heard 'round the blues world. Black urban listeners — most of whom, like Waters, were from the rural South — had found a new voice. It sold out in fewer than 48 hours. Rooted in the traditions of contrapunctal Delta blues, yet breathing in the amped-up electricity of that big Illinois town, Waters instantly and forever redefined modern music.

Without Muddy, there could be no Rolling Stones ... much less blues guitar-hero successors like Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan and so on. It follows then that these records would have lasting influence, importance ... and disciples. We started this blog to explore and celebrate them. Because they are us. If you follow every Muddy creek and stream (and we do), then you've heard Steady Rollin' Bob Margolin. I'd recommend 1993's 'Down in the Alley' from this old-school protege who played with Waters from 1973 through 1980.

Here, we find a young guitarist unafraid of stepping into Muddy's deep footprints. He makes loose use of delay-time rhythm playing, a mean slide scream, this cool head-back growl and, lastly, the duo and trio ideas that we so successful for his old boss. (Remember that Waters' first recordings included nothing more than Muddy and slap-happy bassist Ernest "Big" Crawford; later, Little Walter was added on harmonica.)

Like those post-war masterpieces, the tunes making use of the classic duo or trio format here are the healthiest, most unerring tunes. Best of all are the pairings with vocalist Nappy Brown — whose brown-bottle baritone is supple, trembly and fine. In fact — outside of the raucous, yet oddly bland, opener — Margolin's first big record has much to offer. Truth is, the full-band dynamic can work for him, as with "Lonesome Bedroom Blues" — but that may be only because Kaz Kazanoff backs off on the sax a bit. Even the most obvious track here — Muddy's "Look What You've Done" — comes off, believe it or not. It was Bob's most unguarded vocal yet.
---Nick DeRiso

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