

Earl Hooker □ – The Genius Of Earl Hooker (1967)

Written by bluesever

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A1 Two Bugs In A Rug A2 Hold On... I'm Coming A3 Off The Hook A4 Dust My Broom A5 Hot And Heavy A6 The Screwdriver B1 Bertha B2 The Foxtrot B3 End Of The Blues B4 Walking The Floor B5 Hooker Special B6 Something You Ate Earl Hooker - Primary Artist

This rare circa-1967 album has what you'd expect from a vintage Earl Hooker LP: blues instrumentals with unfailingly stinging guitar, a relaxed groove, and soul-tinged arrangements bolstered by solid organ. If it's mighty reliable in what it delivers, it also has to be said that there aren't many surprises, the tracks coming close to very high-class blues background music in some senses. As that limited genre goes, however, this is at the top of that class, Hooker throwing in enough energetic flourishes, swoops, and musical equivalents of exclamation points to not just keep things interesting, but also keep a smile on your face. A few familiar blues and soul tunes are covered here, including "Dust My Broom," "Hold On, I'm Coming," and "Something You Got," the last of these unappetizingly retitled "Something You Ate." But for the most part the program is original, including one number, "Bertha," that seems to look toward Santo & Johnny's sleepy slide guitar workouts for inspiration. --- Richie Unterberger, AllMusic Review

Earl Hooker was one of these artists taken from us way too soon. In his 41 years he left music that influenced the likes of B.B. King, Guitar Slim, Johnny "Guitar" Watson, Albert Collins, Little Milton, Buddy Guy, Sue Foley, Otis Rush, and Louis Myers. Hooker began to play when he was about ten years old. Playing street corners in Chicago in the 1940s, he formed a friendship with Robert Nighthawk, from whom he adopted his style of slide play wherein he used a light touch, and a short steel slide that allowed him to switch from slide to fretted work more easily. He also

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was not adverse to incorporating electronic effects into his rig, and he did so long before a majority of players moved in that direction.

What made Hooker so interesting, besides his incredible technique, was that he could play soul, country, R&B, and of course, blues. The Genius of Earl Hooker, issued by Cuca in 1967, is a collection of instrumentals that Hooker had recorded between 1964 and 1967. As an album, this is not Hooker's finest moment by any stretch. The importance of the music here is the window it provides us into Hooker's approach to various songs, some very well known, and the way in which he chooses to deliver them. Inevitably, comparisons are made between this album, and say, Let's Hide Away and Dance Away with Freddy King. In a lot of ways, that is like comparing apples and oranges. Different styles, different approaches to the fretboard, different tone, and different visions.

The Genius of Earl Hooker has some really fine guitar moments including his unique take on Sam and Dave's "Hold On I'm Coming," and "Off The Hook." The vocal quality of guitar on "Bertha" is haunting. The fretwork on "End of The Blues" is remarkable, and "Walking To The Floor" still puts a big smile on our faces. "Something You Ate" features picking that is beautifully fluid. Hooker's guitar tone is superb throughout.

If you haven't listened to this album, give it a go. As a historical marker, and a snapshot of Hooker, it is invaluable. --- chicagoblues.com

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