

Ruff Kutt Blues Band - Mill Block Blues (2011)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 01 October 2015 17:11 -

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1. *Cut Like A Knife* (feat. Anson Funderburgh & Dempsey Crenshaw) 3:50 2. *Living Without You* (feat. Anson Funderburgh & Steve "Big Bo" Richardson) 4:31 3. *Drown On Dry Land* (feat. Anson Funderburgh & Michael Schaefer) 3:25 4. *Now You See Me* (feat. Anson Funderburgh & Andrew "Jr. Boy" Jones) 5:40 5. *Stone Cold Woman* (feat. Anson Funderburgh & Dempsey Crenshaw) 5:00 6. *This Is the Place* (feat. Anson Funderburgh & Dempsey Crenshaw) 3:40 7. *The Fowler Street Stumble* (feat. Anson Funderburgh, John Street & Ron Jones) 4:50 8. *She's Gone* (feat. Andrew "Jr. Boy" Jones) 3:58 9. *Mill Block Blues* (feat. Anson Funderburgh & Michael Schaefer) 3:39 10. *Rock When You Need To* (feat. Anson Funderburgh & Kenny Daniel) 3:41 11. *Oh Lord* (feat. Anson Funderburgh & ShuRhonda Kemp) 3:27 12. *Daddy Sang the Blues* (feat. Anson Funderburgh & Dempsey Crenshaw) 7:19 13. *I'm On My Own* (feat. Anson Funderburgh & Michael Schaefer) 3:04

Anson Funderburgh – guitar, vocals
Gentleman John Street – keyboards
Forres Wesley Starr – drums
Andrew "Jr. Boy" Jones – vocals
Dempsey Chrenshaw – vocals, harmonica
Christian Dozzler – accordion
Hash Brown – harmonica
Ron Jones - saxophone
Don Cates - rhythm guitar
Steven Richardson – drums, vocals
Shurhonda Kemp – vocals
Kenny Daniel - vocals

Now listen here all fans of great Texas blues. Unfurl the banners, ready the champagne and get ready to celebrate the return to the recording studio of Anson Funderburgh on this exciting release which is also raising funds for HART, the Blues Foundation's charity fund for blues musicians in need. This is a worthy cause and it is great to see Anson back on CD, so the only remaining question is whether it is a good CD. Delighted to say that, in my view, it certainly is!

After the sad death of Sam Myers, Anson Funderburgh took his band The Rockets off the road and his sabbatical has lasted some five years, apart from occasional sightings on the local Texas scene and a few appearances on other people's records. This CD is the brainchild of one "Blue" James Goode, a bass player on the Dallas scene and an old friend of Anson's. It seems that James had a bunch of songs and when he retired from his day job he recruited Anson to produce a recording of his tunes. Anson then in turn recruited a stellar cast of Texas musicians,

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as well as playing lead guitar on most of the album himself. James Goode is on bass throughout and “Gentleman” John Street, a veteran of The Rockets, plays all keyboards and arranged all the music. Wes Starr, another “Rocketeer” plays drums on most tracks and Ron Jones plays all horns, at times sounding like a one-man army of players! Guests include Andrew “Jr Boy” Jones who plays guitar on three tracks and sings on two, Dempsey Crenshaw who sings on four tracks and plays harp on one, Steven Richardson who plays drums on two tracks and sings on one of them and Michael Schaefer who sings on three tracks. Appearing on one track each are vocalists Kenny Daniel and Sugar Mama, Christian Dozzler on accordion, Don Cates on guitar and Brian “Hash Brown” Calway who plays harp. That is quite a cast but I’ve named them all as everyone’s contribution is worthwhile. All the material bar one track is by James Goode who collaborated with Michael Schaefer on one cut; the exception is an instrumental composed by Anson and John Street.

All the singers do a good job and the playing is right on the money throughout. The CD opens with a rousing shuffle “Cut Like A Knife”, sung by Dempsey Crenshaw. The horns accentuate the rolling riff, Anson’s guitar embellishes the tune with great fills and a fine solo, the whole being ably supported by John Street’s piano and organ playing. The second track “Living Without You” is a slower tune which features Steven Richardson on vocals and drums and sax player Ron Jones, both on solo sax and (courtesy of multi-tracking) horn arrangements. My only slight criticism is that the song again uses the “cuts like a knife” phrase, so might have been better placed later in the programme. Third up is Michael Schaefer singing “Drown On Dry Land” with Anson laying down some tough guitar and another good sax solo. Track four “Now You See Me” sees Andrew Jones on guitar and vocals and the accordion of Christian Dozzler adding a touch of the Mexican border to the sound although the overall feel of the song is more straight blues than Tex-Mex.

“Stone Cold Woman” and “This Is The Place” both feature Dempsey Crenshaw on vocals. The stone cold woman of the title is that inevitable bad girl/voodoo woman who the guy is still fatally attracted to despite all her nasty characteristics. The place is where the party is and it is going to go on all night long, a catchy rocker with nice piano and guitar. “The Fowler Street Stumble” is the lone instrumental on the album. Placed as the middle track on the CD it provides a classy interlude. Driven by the swinging organ and Anson’s sparkling guitar this is just the sort of instrumental that The Rockets always featured on their CDs, with the addition of a great sax solo from Ron Jones.

“She’s Gone” is the second vocal feature for Andrew Jones. A funkier approach here on a tale of the deserted man who is “having the best time of my life – I’m glad she’s gone”. Andrew’s slightly raspy vocal suits the song and he also provides a short but excellent guitar solo too. Ron Jones turns to the baritone sax for his solo here.

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The title track "Mill Block Blues" follows and is perhaps the best song on the album with a tough rolling tune and a lyric about growing up in harsh circumstances against the backdrop of a traditional industry. Michael Schaefer sings his co-write song and Anson nails a great solo. To lighten the mood "Rock When You Need To" is a fun little tune about playing the blues for a living. Vocalist Kenny Daniel has just the right voice for a song like this one, a little frayed at the edges as you might find in a blues bar on a Saturday night.

In complete contrast "Oh Lord" is a straight gospel piece, just piano accompanying Sugar Mama's vocal at the beginning. After one verse the band joins in and we are right in the church for this prayer. "Daddy Sang The Blues" is the longest cut on the CD at over seven minutes, with Dempsey Crenshaw on vocal, a straight ahead slow blues with harp by Brian Calway, plenty of strong piano and guitar. The CD closes with Michael Schaefer singing "I'm On My Own" which has something of a Jimmy Reed feel to it with Dempsey Crenshaw providing the harp.

I really enjoyed this release and it is wonderful to hear Anson Funderburgh's playing on record again. This is a well-produced CD with a series of strong vocalists doing justice to the songs. My personal favourite tracks were the title track, instrumental "The Fowler Street Stumble" and "This Is The Place", but everything here is right on the money. The CD is available from the website noted above and CD Baby. I suspect that it may not be available for very long, so get it while you can. ---John Mitchel, thebluesblast.com

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