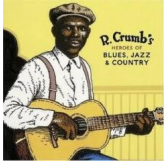


R. Crumb's Heroes of Blues, Jazz & Country (2006)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 31 August 2013 15:55 -

R. Crumb's Heroes of Blues, Jazz & Country (2006)



01. Memphis Jug Band - On The Road Again 02. Blind Willie McTell - Dark Night Blues 03. Cannon's Jug Stompers - Minglewood Blues 04. Skip James - Hard Time Killin' Floor Blues 05. Jaybird Coleman - I'm Gonna Cross The River Of Jordan - Some O' These Days 06. Charley Patton - High Water Everywhere 07. Frank Stokes - I Got Mine 08. "Dock" Boggs - Sugar Baby 09. Shelor Family - Big Bend Gal 10. Hayes Sheperd - The Peddler And His Wife 11. Crockett's Kentucky Mountaineers - Little Rabbit 12. Burnett & Rutherford - All Night Long Blues 13. East Texas Serenaders - Mineola Rag 14. Weems String Band - Greenback Dollar 15. Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra - Kater Street Rag 16. "King" Oliver's Creole Jazz Band - Sobbin' Blues 17. Parham-Pickett Apollo Syncopators - Mojo Strut 18. Frankie Franko & His Louisianians - Somebody Stole My Gal 19. Clarence Williams' Blue Five - Wild Cat Blues 20. "Jelly Roll" Morton's Red Hot Peppers - Kansas City Stomps 21. Jimmy Noone - King Joe

Wow! Every so often you run across something that knocks your socks off. R. Crumb's Heroes of Blues, Jazz, & Country left me barefooted.

In the 1980s, Robert Crumb, whom Robert Hughes appropriately once called the "Breughel of the 20th century," created sets of trading cards featuring some of his favorite blues, jazz, and country musicians. (The plan was to include one card per LP sold by innovative record firm Yazoo.) This collection, edited by Terry Zwigoff, the same guy who directed the documentary "Crumb," pulls together the illustrations from all three sets. They're wonderful. The blues and country illustrations are drawn, and are vintage Crumb: crosshatched, brooding characters. The jazz illustrations are water-colored. They're identifiably Crumb, but have a definitely different feel to them.

Crumb is a fascinating genius. Although his art and comics tend to be avant-garde (a term he

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might well disdain) and iconoclastic, Crumb also has a real affinity for late 19th and early 20th century American culture. Part of this love for an earlier time, no doubt, stems from his intense dislike of the fast-paced, loud, and garish American culture he eventually fled in the 1990s (Crumb now lives in France). But part of it is that he thinks the music produced in the early 20th century represents folk art at its finest and purest, before music became an industry. Crumb began collecting old 78s when he was still a teenager, and his love for the older music has never waned.

And so to the piece de resistance of this book: the accompanying 21 cut CD. Crumb personally chose the pieces, and they're absolutely fantastic. Except for a couple of the blues and jazz musicians, all of the artists are virtually unknown except to the aficionado. But man oh man, are they wonderful. Skip James' rendering of "Hard Time Killin' Floor Blues" is a heart-breaker. Dock Boggs' "Sugar Baby" and Burnett & Rutherford's "All Night Long Blues" are haunting in their strange but beautiful ways. And no matter how bad things get, Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra's "Kater Street Rag" will pick you up. My son and I have listened to the CD over and over and over, and we never get tired of it. He prefers the blues and jazz, I'm in love with the hillbilly blue grass cuts. But the whole CD--well, it just knocks your socks off. ---Kerry Walters, amazon.com

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