

Sunny Lowdown - The Blues Volume Low (2014)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Can't Be Satisfied* (3:04) 02. *Hobo Blues* (3:04) 03. *Mean Old World* (3:25) 04. *First Chance Blues* (3:03) 05. *Texas Blues* (3:07) 06. *Tear My Playhouse Down* (3:22) 07. *Cairo Blues* (2:38) 08. *Big Town Playboy* (2:38) 09. *Worried Life Blues* (2:45) 10. *Red Devil Blues* (4:00) 11. *Shotgun Blues* (3:35) 12. *Ice Cream Man* (3:19) 13. *Can't Be Satisfied (Banjo)* (0:26) Sunny Lowdown – vocals, guitar – solo performer

So says a proverb as old as the hills, and so proves Sunny Lowdown on his debut album, *The Blues Volume Low*. Out of his thirteen IPO's, initial public offerings to the blues world, eleven of them are covers. Originally from Horizon, Arkansas and now residing in Vermont, he draws from such renowned and masterful sources as Muddy Waters, T-Bone Walker, Duane Allman, John Brim, and John Lee Hooker, whom he first backed up when he was only sixteen years old.

According to his promotional information sheet, "He went on to work with many of his favorite blues musicians: Howlin' Wolf guitarist Hubert Sumlin, Muddy Waters pianist Pinetop Perkins, Chicago blues legends Otis Rush and George 'Wild Child' Butler, and Fat Possum recording artists R.L. Burnside and Cedell Davis, among others.... 'I always liked the signers who could sit with just their guitar and tell you a story,' he says. 'Whether they had written the song or not, they made it their story.'"

That's what Sunny attempts to do on this CD, with mixed and uneven results, but there's no doubt that each song is pure blues. With him are bassist Sunny Bottom and drummer Sunny Tubs. These three tracks reviewed below are the only two originals and a familiar opener:

Track 01: "Can't Be Satisfied" – When asked to name ten blues songs off the top of their heads,

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most fans would list this Muddy Waters hit in their primary mental collection. Sunny Lowdown's version may be a cover, but it captures the essence of his whole debut perfectly. He plays great guitar, which reverberates cleanly throughout the venue of GPI Studios. Sunny Tubs' rat-a-tat drumsticks add extra pep. Is this song good? Yes. Is it fantastic by comparison? Maybe. It all depends on how many times, and how many different renditions, that one has heard before.

Track 04: "First Chance Blues" – All of us have to start somewhere, and for most Americans, that place is school. Yet the academic track (and, failing that, the fast track) aren't for everyone: "You know I tried to get an education; but each examination did I fail. Even when I went night-clubbing, you know I always wound up in jail." This is straight-up blues, featuring one man and his guitar. What you hear is what you get, without overdubs or studio prestidigitation.

Track 05: "Texas Blues" – Number five isn't so much about Texas as it is about the gal who tried to "quit" our narrator in the Lone Star State: "Little girl named Eliza. Everybody called her Jane [huh?]. Got a way of loving – drive me insane. Whoo, she's the sweetest girl in town." It's catchy, but also a bit reductive.

Based on his fretwork alone, one can easily see why Sunny Lowdown got to back John Lee Hooker. However, one will wish he had more new blues stories to tell on "Volume Low." --- Rainey Wetnight, bluesblastmagazine.com

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