

The Cash Box Kings - Hail To The Kings! (2019)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Ain't No Fun (When The Rabbit Got The Gun)* 3:08 2 *The Wine Talkin'* 3:50 3 *Take Anything I Can* 3:55 4 *Smoked Jowl Blues* 4:30 5 *Back Off* 3:02 6 *I'm The Man Down There* 3:19 7 *Poison In My Whiskey* 4:44 8 *Joe, You Ain't From Chicago* 3:32 9 *Bluesman Next Door* 4:44 10 *Hunchin' On My Baby* 2:53 11 *Jon Burge Blues* 4:37 12 *Sugar Daddy* 5:44 13 *The Wrong Number* 2:49

Double Bass [Upright Bass], Electric Bass, Percussion – John W. Lauler Drums – Kenny "Beedy Eyes" Smith (tracks: 2 to 10, 12, 13) Featuring [With], Drums – Derek Hendrickson Featuring [With], Lead Guitar – Xavier Lynn (tracks: 9, 11) Featuring [With], Piano, Electric Piano, Organ – Queen Lee Kanehira Featuring [With], Rhythm Guitar – Little Frank Krakowski (tracks: 1 to 8, 10, 12, 13) Guest [Special Guest] – Alex Hall (tracks: 8, 11) Guest [Special Guest], Vocals – Shemekia Copeland (tracks: 2) Harmonica, Percussion – Joe Nosek Lead Guitar – Billy Flynn (tracks: 1 to 8, 10 to 13) Vocals – "Low Rollin' Joe" Nosek (tracks: 5, 8, 10), Oscar Wilson (tracks: 1 to 4, 6 to 9, 11 to 13)

This album is dedicated to all the great bluesmen who have passed since our last recording, especially Otis Rush, Lazy Lester, Jody Williams, Matt "Guitar" Murphy, Eddy Clearwater, Eddie C. Campbell, Eddie Taylor Jr., and Mike Ledbetter.

It is also dedicated to our friend and devoted blues fan, Jerry Koopman. R.I.P. ---In booklet, discogs.com

It's hard not to see the title of Hail to the Kings! as the Cash Box Kings celebrating themselves, but this 2019 album -- the group's second for Alligator -- makes it plain that the quintet can

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occasionally plant their tongues firmly in cheek. Case in point: "Joe, You Ain't from Chicago," where the group's twin leaders vocalist Oscar Wilson and harmonicist Joe Nosek do their best Bo Diddley and Jerome Green routine, trading barbs all intended to show how Nosek is truly a native of Madison, Wisconsin, not the Windy City. It's funny and it's smart, revealing that all of the Cash Box Kings are not only in on the joke, but that their hearts belong to Chicago. Certainly, Hail to the Kings! is an enthusiastic celebration of Chicago blues in all of its electric forms. Wilson gets to duet with Shemekia Copeland on the bawdy "The Wine Talkin'," the group revives Jimmy Reed's "I'm the Man Down There," they descend into a slow groove on "Sugar Daddy," and offer several hyper-charged shuffles. The interplay is elastic and gritty, as is the sound of the record; maybe the surface is crystal clear, but the levels are still happily pushed into the red. All this means Hail to the Kings! is a rollicking good time, but what gives the album resonance is how the Cash Box Kings don't merely pay homage to the past, they bring tradition into the present. Throughout the album, Wilson casually sings about elements of the modern world -- he doesn't call "The Wrong Number," he texts it -- which helps set up the gut-punch of "Jon Burge Blues," an angry protest number about the late Chicago Police Department commander who regularly framed and tortured black prisoners. "Jon Burge Blues" is the only explicitly political number on Hail to the Kings! but it is so powerful it echoes throughout the rest of the album, making the Cash Box Kings case that the blues can still speak forcefully and directly about contemporary life. ---Stephen Thomas Erlewine, AllMusic Review

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