

Rebecca Downes - Back To The Start (2014)

Written by bluesever

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1. Messed Up 4:27 2. When I'm Bad 3:40 3. Fever in the Night 4:28 4. Round and Round 3:38 5. Laughter From Her Room 3:56 6. Basement of My Heart 4:02 7. Walking With Shadows 5:25 8. Back to the Start 4:31 9. Better For Knowing You 4:10 10. Little Girl 4:15 Rebecca Downes - vocals Steve Birkett – lead guitar, backing vocals Rick Benton – keys and Hammond organ Dan Clark – bass guitar Lloyd Daker – drums

UK artist Rebecca DOWNES has established herself firmly as an up and coming artist in the British blues scene, grabbing two awards from the British Blues Awards in 2016. A fairly quick rise to recognition since she returned to music in 2011, having recorded material and performed also in an earlier period of her life. “Back to the Start” is her debut album, and was initially released back in 2014.

I have to admit that blues isn't the type of music I'm most well versed in. In the case of Rebecca Downes, this is further complicated by her also visiting some other flavors of music that is a bit outside of my normal turf, this secondary orientation being country. Not that this matters all that much, but for genre aficionados my points of view should be regarded with that in mind.

The ten tracks on this debut album does cover quite a few bases. Smooth electric blues with flowing guitar solos and careful organ backing is a part of the package, as are occasional visits to a more southern rock tinged sound complete with grittier guitars. Night club tinged atmospheres with jazz-tinged instrument details have a place here too, as does some forays into more of a country-oriented expression. On a couple of occasions we're also treated to material much closer to mainstream pop/rock than anything else.

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Blues is the common denominator throughout however, and I wouldn't be all that surprised if some of the songs on this album are explored in a more blues-oriented manner live as well. Again not something that is all that important, as this is an album that most likely will appeal beyond the purebred blues audience anyhow.

The key detail to note about this production are the lead vocals. Downes have aligned herself with skilled musicians, but they do take a back seat to her vocals. Finely controlled throughout, she is a singer capable of sultry primadonna style vocals and finely controlled frail modes of delivery just as much as powerful, majestic takes on the lyrics as well as raw, emotional yet fully controlled singing. A vocalist easily able to carry a tune as well as an album with her voice.

"Back to the Start" is a very well made album throughout, with the lead vocals grabbing the limelight from the get go. While the songs do have some forays into other genres of music, the main focus is on blues, and those fond of blues with a strong female lead vocalist should treasure this production just as much as those who take pleasure in hearing a quality female vocalist in general. ---Olav Martin Bjørnsen, framemusic.net

A friend had been raving about Rebecca for several months now, and last week-end finally got the chance to see what the fuss was about. Wow, he wasn't wrong - 5ft2 of silver throated dynamite took the stage, with just her co-writer on acoustic guitar support and held a packed house for a superb set based round this album. No way was I going to leave the venue without a copy, and on driving home, this was straight in the player and hasn't been out since. Stand-out tracks are Basement of My Heart and Walking With Shadows, but it's not an easy pick as each track is strong in it's own right. Rebecca has been canny in that each song has a slight style shift, from Alt Country, through rockin' blues to light jazz - each fitting her voice perfectly. Another plus, she doesn't get bogged down in maudlin songs, there's some sass and more than a bit feisty going on there. Strong as the album is though, you've really got to see her live - leave your socks at home though as when the voice gets full rein, she'll blow you out of them. ---Miss Dynamite, amazon.co.uk

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