

## Jane Lee Hooker - Spiritus (2017)

Written by bluesever  
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1 *How Ya Doin?* 6:06 2 *Gimme That* 3:52 3 *Mama Said* 4:43 4 *Be My Baby* 5:44 5 *Later On* 5:38 6 *Black Rat* 3:00 7 *Ends Meet* 4:55 8 *How Bright The Moon* 4:01 9 *Turn On Your Love Light* 5:10 10 *The Breeze* 9:45 Dana "Danger" Athens - vocals High Top - guitar Tina "T Bone" Gorin - guitar Hail Mary Z - bass Melissa "Cool Whip" Houston - drums

Blues fans, don't let the name of this NYC band fool you. Jane Lee Hooker consists of rock mavens, pure and simple. They brand their style of music "punk blues," but their sophomore album leans vastly more to the punk side than the blues side. One might make the same observation about Ana Popovic, another Ruf Records recording artist, and be absolutely right. The appeal of all these fabulous females lies in their Spiritus – spirit – which Jane Lee Hooker and her all-gal quintet bare, holding nothing back. With a touch of Sheryl Crow, a dash of Alanis Morissette, and a pinch of the immortal Janis, they know how to stir classic influences into their original material. Out of ten songs, only two are covers: Minnie Lawler's "Black Rat" (reviewed below) and Don Robey's "Turn On Your Love Light." Unsurprisingly, these tracks are the ones that sound the most like traditional blues. On all selections, the usual New York City adjectives apply: realist, gritty, edgy, hard-bitten, electric, and of course, avant-garde. In the Big Apple, if musicians aren't pushing the envelope of their genre, they might as well be pushing up daisies. Young blues fans may really dig this CD, but baby-boomer purists will probably look elsewhere to get their genre jones satisfied.

"We're a gang," says the lineup: Dana "Danger" Athens on vocals, piano and organ; Tracy "High Top" Almazan on guitar; Tina "T-Bone" Gorin on guitar; Melissa "Cool Whip" Houston on drums, and "Hail Mary" Zadroga on bass. "We're a family." As for the album itself, "Spiritus is almost entirely original music written by the band as a unit, which has been really exciting and really gratifying. We write so naturally together; it's been pretty effortless." When it comes to studio effects and slick editing, however, you won't find much. "We wanted this album to sound like we do live – raw and high-energy. And we operated under the same credo we had with [our debut release] No B! – all live, no effects, no pedals, no overdubbing nonsense. I think we captured

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the excitement, and we have the same real sounds that we loved so much on No B!"

The following cover hurtles like a Maglev train toward its conclusion. There's no stopping it.

Track 06: "Black Rat" – Listen well and listen fast. The lyrics come, and then they're past: "You is one black rat. One day I'll find your trail. Then I'll hide my shoes right near your shirttail!" Moral? What goes around comes around, and for this rambling rodent, hopefully sooner than later. Every musician is on full-blast here, and "Danger" Athens' vocals are spot-on Joplin.

When it comes to Jane Lee Hooker's second release, they've delivered on all the goals and promises mentioned earlier. With that said, there's one major caveat yours truly must deliver: It's not that Spiritus isn't good. It's just not blues. ---Rainey Wetnight, bluesblastmagazine.com

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