

Canned Heat – Hallelujah (1969)

Written by bluesever

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Canned Heat – Allelujah (1969)



01. *Same All Over* (Robert Hite, Jr., Henry Vestine, Larry Taylor, Fito de la Parra) – 2:50 02. *Change My Ways* (Alan Wilson) – 2:48 03. *Canned Heat* (Robert Hite, Jr.) – 4:21 04. *Sic 'Em Pigs* (Robert Hite, Jr., Booker T. White) – 2:38 05. *I'm Her Man* (Robert Hite, Jr.) – 2:55 06. *Time Was* (Vestine, Wilson, Taylor, Hite, Parra) – 3:21 07. *Do Not Enter* (Alan Wilson) – 2:50 08. *Big Fat* (Fats Domino) – 1:58 09. *Huautla* (Fito de la Parra) – 3:33 10. *Get Off My Back* (Alan Wilson) – 5:10 11. *Down In The Gutter, But Free* (Hite, Vestine, Taylor, Parra) – 5:35
Personnel: - Robert Hite, Jr. – vocals (02,06,07,10), harp (08) - Alan Wilson – slide guitar, vocals (01,03,04,08,11), harp (05,07,09,11), whistling (02) - Henry Vestine – lead guitar, bass (11) - Larry Taylor – bass, backing vocals (04) - Fito de la Parra – drums + - Ernest Lane - organ & piano (01) - Mark Naftalin - organ & piano (05,11) - Elliot Ingber, Skip Diamond - backing vocals (01,11) - Javier Baitz - backing vocals (01) - Mike Pacheco - bongos & congas (09)

With Bob Hite and Alan Wilson switching off on vocals, Canned Heat delivered as consistent a blues product as George Thorogood, only with more diversity and subtle musical nuances keeping the listener involved. "Same All Over" breaks no new ground, opening up the Hallelujah disc, but the enthusiasm and reverence the band has for the genre is special. Al Wilson's distinctive voice -- heard on two Top 20 hit records in 1968 -- is enhanced with his eerie whistling on "Change My Ways" and the wonderfully ragged instrumentation. The way the keys bubble up under the guitars, it would have been a natural for these guys to groove their way into a Grateful Dead-style jam band thing, but two vocalists dying within an 11-year span is a bit much for any ensemble. The name Canned Heat is so cool that it becomes the title of the third song. "Canned Heat" is a pretty accurate description of what they play, and the bluesy, slow Bob Hite vocal works wonders over the incessant Henry Vestine/Alan Wilson guitar work. Nice stuff. Jim Newsom calls "Sic 'Em Pigs" "an entertaining era-specific goof." The slide guitars herald the anti-police anthem, featuring drummer Fito de la Parra, Alan Wilson, and Henry Vestine making the pig noises, with a public service announcement for the Los Angeles Sheriff's Dept. thrown in for good measure. Skip Taylor's production work is just fine, a muddy blend of instrumentation making for a cohesive sound wall on "I'm Her Man" and Wilson's "Time Was." Hallelujah was the group's fourth release for Liberty Records and it is a slice of Americana by a

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relatively young band with a very pure grasp of the music they love. The liner notes are a tip of the hat to the people of the plains, "the midsection of America," where man finds nothing but "himself, the land, and the sun." "Do Not Enter" opens side two with experimental blues and Alan Wilson's haunting voice, something akin to pop singer Chris Montez performing a dirge. Hite's very appropriate adaptation of "Big Fat" explodes with his own harp work and the band egging him on, an ode to his being overweight -- something that no doubt did him in a decade later. "Huatla" changes directions totally, Mike Pacheco's bongos and congas adding a Latin feel to the harp-soaked instrumental. The two longest songs on the album conclude side two, a unique "Get off My Back"

with musical twists and an intensely plodding "Down in the Gutter, but Free" with everyone in the group contributing to the "songwriting" of the jam, including bassist Henry Vestine and guitarist Larry Taylor. Though there was no specific hit on Hallelujah, this enjoyable album shows Canned Heat's innovation, which would inspire groups like Duke & the Drivers down the road, fans so obsessed with the subject matter that they crossed over to the professional arena. --- Joe Viglione, Rovi

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