

## Lonnie Johnson With Elmer Snowden - Blues and Ballads (1960)

Written by bluesever

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- 1 - *Haunted House*
  - 2 - *Memories Of You*
  - 3 - *Blues For Chris*
  - 4 - *I Found A Dream*
  - 5 - *St. Louis Blues* [play](#)
  - 6 - *I'll Get Along Somehow*
  - 7 - *Savoy Blues* [play](#)
  - 8 - *Backwater Blues*
  - 9 - *Elmer's Blues*
  - 10 - *He's A Jelly Roll Baker*
- \* Lonnie Johnson - electric guitar, vocals
  - \* Elmer Snowden - acoustic guitar
  - \* Wendell Marshall - bass

The album has generally received high acclaim. Although one writer appears to disregard the album with a single sentence, calling it "just plain sad, lacking even the vitality of rock and roll." Others have noted Johnson's "plaintive, slightly nasal voice" and indicated that he "sings smooth blues and sentimental ballads with equal skill." described as a "sympathetic accompanist" with "an easy swingingly graceful style." One reviewer calls Johnson's performance on the blues numbers "convincing, affecting interpretations," but indicates that his performance on the three ballads is less consistent. He states, "On 'Memories of You', his approach is gentle and lyrical, and yet his controlled inner tension builds tremendous emotional power. Two other ballads, his own compositions are too stickily sentimental to be effective."

This beautiful album was engineered by Rudy Van Gelder in his Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, home studio where so much jazz history was made. It features guitar innovators Lonnie

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Johnson and Elmer Snowden together for the first time--despite a friendship going back to the 1920s when both appeared on some of the earliest jazz and blues 78s. Johnson, the father of single-note six-string soloing, is in marvelous voice on this selection of blues, ballads, and jazz, crooning the double-entendre "Jelly Roll Baker" and the heartache-laden "Back Water Blues" (a Bessie Smith tune he first cut in 1927) with a marksman's sense of pitch and chilling nuance. Snowden serves mostly as accompanist. But these men play so closely that they seem to be sharing every breath. --Ted Drozdowski, amazon.com

One of Lonnie Johnson's numerous comeback albums of the early 1960s, Blues & Ballads coincides with the folk/blues revival of that era, and presents the revered New Orleans-born guitarist/singer in fine form, despite years of inactivity. Ably assisted by guitarist Elmer Snowden and bassist Wendell Marshall, Johnson applies his plaintive croon and deft guitar playing to both sauntering rural blues tunes (the weary "Back Water Blues") and gorgeous jazz-tinged ballads (a spare, poignant take on "Memories of You"), effortlessly revealing his artistic range. A must for fans of the underrated bluesman, this record is followed by the excellent companion piece Blues, Ballads, & Jumpin' Jazz. ---allmusic.com

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