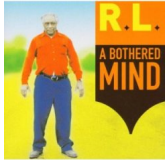


R.L. Burnside - A Bothered Mind (2004)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 09 November 2010 09:50 - Last Updated Monday, 17 June 2013 09:23

R.L. Burnside - A Bothered Mind (2004)



01. *Detroit Boogie Part 1*
02. *See What My Buddy Done*
03. *Shake 'Em Down* [play](#)
04. *Goin' Down South*
05. *My Name Is Robert Too*
06. *Someday Baby*
07. *Go To Jail* [play](#)
08. *Bird Without A Feather*
09. *Glory Be*
10. *Goin' Away Baby*
11. *Rollin' And Tumblin'*
12. *Stole My Check*
13. *Detroit Boogie Part 2*

Personnel:

R.L. Burnside (vocals, guitar);
Lyrics Born (vocals, various instruments);
Kenny Olson, Mike Smith (guitar, bass guitar);
Martin Gross (guitar, drums);
Mike Smith (guitar);
Jimmy Bones (harp, harmonica, piano, keyboards);
John Scott Evans (saxophone);
Mike Hollis (bass guitar);
Kid Rock (vocals);
Kenny Brown (guitar, slide guitar);
Cedric Burnside (drums);
Mike E. Clark (scratches).

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When R.L. Burnside and the rest of the Fat Possum confederation emerged from the northern Mississippi hills in the early '90s, they gave contemporary blues a much-needed shot in the ass, reminding everyone that the genre really wasn't so much about pyrotechnic guitar histrionics as it was about getting folks to hit the dancefloor, and once there, making sure they stayed. Burnside in particular has been a fascinating and intriguing musician ever since, and even as he cruises through his eighties, he may well be the most progressive and postmodern of anyone on the current blues scene. Although his basic template is and remains a John Lee Hooker-like modal boogie shuffle, Burnside has combined it with full-tilt garage and punk band dynamics (1996's *A Ass Pocket of Whiskey*, with the raucous backing of the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion) and controversial (to blues purists) techno nation hip-hop effects (1998's *Come On In*, featuring Beck mixmaster Tom Rothrock), and while these experiments haven't always worked, they show a playful willingness to treat the blues as something fun and vital, not some dusty, nostalgic period music trotted out on display from the music museum. No, Burnside's version of the blues is powerful, visceral, and -- this is often overlooked -- playful, with his almost demonic chuckle being as recognizable a feature of his music as any guitar lick.

A Bothered Mind is perhaps the most ideally representative of all of Burnside's albums, ranging from solo acoustic tracks to crunching boogie struts, all with a light dose of hip-hop and enough scratching and looping effects to make this clearly an album from the 21st century. Amazingly, it all works as a cohesive whole, opening with a 38-second live fragment of "Detroit Boogie" (in which Burnside intones "I do what I want..."), and then closing with the full version. In between these bookends, the album -- aside from the rather contrived Kid Rock track, "My Name Is Robert Too" -- is continually fascinating, and it never stops churning.

The most striking track is also the earliest and simplest, a solo acoustic version of "Bird Without a Feather" that was field recorded by folklorist George Mitchell in 1968. Two tracks here, the umpteenth version of Burnside's signature "Goin' Down South" and "Someday Baby," were produced by Lyrics Born (T. Shimura) of the Quannum collective, and he gives both songs a delightful hip-hop sheen without sacrificing one bit of Burnside's irascible swagger. The rap interlude Lyrics Born delivers on "Someday Baby" is nothing less than a second-cousin update of Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues." Perhaps the most surprising song here is "Glory Be," which finds Burnside exploring some more new territory, this time inventing a kind of Saturday night juke joint gospel. Listen for R.L.'s chuckle all through these tracks. He's having fun. He's pushing the blues forward, all without changing a beat. He's making relevant albums when musicians half his age are washed up and creatively exhausted. Is he trying to say that rap is the new blues? Mostly he's just trying to keep that dancefloor filled. ~ *Steve Leggett*

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