

Chicago Blues Reunion - Buried Alive In The Blues (2005)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 01 November 2009 11:21 - Last Updated Friday, 05 June 2015 13:27

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01. *Born In Chicago (Featuring Nick Gravenites)* 02. *Buried Alive In The Blues (Featuring Nick Gravenites)* 03. *Walk Away (Featuring Tracy Nelson)* 04. *Drinking Wine (Featuring Nick Gravenites)* 05. *GM Boogie (Featuring Barry Goldberg & Harvey Mandel)* 06. *Left Handed Soul (Featuring Nick Gravenites)* 07. *Miss You Like The Devil (Featuring Tracy Nelson)* 08. *All The Help I Can Get (Featuring Tracy Nelson)* 09. *Death Of Muddy Waters (Featuring Nick Gravenites)* 10. *Find My Baby (Featuring Sam Lay)* 11. *New Truck (Featuring Tracy Nelson)* 12. *King Bee (Featuring Corky Siegel)* 13. *Snake (Featuring Harvey Mandel)* 14. *Hound Dog (Featuring Sam Lay)* Line Up: Barry Goldberg - Hammond B3, Wurlitzer electric piano, acoustic piano, background vocals Harvey Mandel - lead guitar Nick Gravenites - lead vocals, guitar Tracy Nelson - lead & background vocals Corky Siegel - harp, lead vocals Sam Lay - Drums, lead vocals Zach Wagner - rhythm guitar, background vocals Rick Reed - bass Gary Mallaber - drums, percussion

Chicago Blues Reunion is a large group whose members include several esteemed blues and blues-rock veterans, among them Barry Goldberg, Nick Gravenites, Tracy Nelson, Corky Siegel, Harvey Mandel, and Sam Lay. This DVD mixes performance footage of the band (all taken from a concert in Berwyn, IL in October, 2004) with interviews and a few archive clips (some of them silent). Although there's considerable material of interest here, it's a bit of an odd jumble that's not wholly a document of Chicago Blues Reunion itself, and not wholly a history of the Chicago blues scene in which these players were involved. It's some of both, and not nearly comprehensive or rigorously organized enough to be an overall history of the Chicago blues scene, or even an overall history of these specific players' involvement in that community. Instead, it presents the musicians telling stories about themselves and each other, usually rooted in their coming-of-age experiences as young blues or blues-influenced artists in the 1960s, with additional context supplied by interviews with non-Chicago Blues Reunion members like critic Joel Selvin and guitarists Buddy Guy and B.B. King.

The stories in the interviews are the highlights, like Barry Goldberg remembering the battle to

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win Muddy Waters' respect and playing with Bob Dylan at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival; Harvey Mandel recalling joining Canned Heat as an emergency fill-in, and playing Woodstock just a few days later; and various memories of the excitement and novelty of being among the first whites to venture into Chicago clubs to check out the blues first-hand in the early and mid-'60s. While the bits of archive footage are interesting, including silent sequences of the young Paul Butterfield and Elvin Bishop in Chicago clubs, and sound clips of Electric Flag, there's not enough to make it worth viewing on that account alone. The scenes of Chicago Blues Reunion in performance are well done, and in addition to providing whatever thematic center this DVD has, they present a solid if somewhat workmanlike lineup of respected veterans. This underscores their function as a link to the classic Chicago blues sound, as Selvin notes, at a time when the original greats like Waters and Howlin' Wolf can't be seen anymore, and the closest you could come was to see people who did see them or play with them.

Although the focus of this is too scattered to recommend to general blues fans, admirers of these specific musicians may enjoy what they have to offer in both the interviews and performances here. (It should be noted that Sam Lay, most famous as a drummer, only vocalizes in his on-stage footage with Chicago Blues Reunion.) Accompanying the DVD is a full 14-song live CD of the band, mixing original material by Gravenites, Nelson, and Mandel with covers of classics by the likes of Slim Harpo and Willie Dixon. It's unfortunate, however, that there are no credits detailing who sings and plays what on each track. --- Richie Unterberger, Rovi

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