

Lynyrd Skynyrd - God & Guns [Deluxe Edition] [2009]

Written by bluesever

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CD 1 01. *Still Unbroken* 5:06 02. *Simple Life* 3:17 03. *Little Thing Called You* 3:58 04. *Southern Ways* 3:48 05. *Skynyrd Nation* 3:52 06. *Unwrite That Song* 3:50 07. *Floyd* 4:03 08. *That Ain't My America* 3:44 09. *Comin' Back For More* 3:29 10. *God & Guns* 5:44 11. *Storm* 3:15 12. *Gifted Hands* 5:22 CD 2 01. *Bang Bang* 3:10 02. *Raining In My Heartland* 3:54 03. *Hobo Kinda Man* 3:53 04. *Red White & Blue (Live)* 5:42 05. *Call Me The Breeze (Live)* 5:49 06. *Sweet Home Alabama (Live)* 6:25

With their classic early lineup, anchored by the swagger, grit, and heart of lead singer Ronnie Van Zant, Lynyrd Skynyrd merged Allman Brothers guitars with barrelhouse piano (courtesy of keyboardist Billy Powell, a bigger part of Skynyrd's classic sound than most people realize), then tossed in a big dose of hard rock attitude and gave it all credence with a kind of blustering and cocky honky tonk sensibility. The original band just sounded so, well, right, and if its legacy in most casual listeners' minds is just "Sweet Home Alabama" and the ubiquitous "Free Bird," that's not a bad legacy to have, really. Skynyrd's story is also a gothic Southern tragedy, haunted by fatal plane crashes and death, and if the 21st century version of the band (current membership includes ex-Blackfoot guitarist Rickey Medlocke, drummer Michael Cartellone, vocalist Johnny Van Zant, and guitarist Gary Rossington, who is the only member left from the original version of Skynyrd) seems more like a facsimile than a continuation, one could chalk it up to pure attrition. So what to make of *God & Guns*, the group's new album from Roadrunner Records? It certainly sounds like Lynyrd Skynyrd, maybe with a little more contemporary Nashville on board, and there's plenty of that Southern redneck rocker attitude on display, but what's missing, unfortunately, is compassion and heart, two qualities that were the secret ingredients in Ronnie Van Zant's singing. Johnny sounds like him, sure, but where Ronnie came across slightly disappointed, wounded, and -- God forbid -- regretful underneath his swagger, Johnny comes across like an archetypal Southern redneck convinced that America is all about guns and God -- one assumes Ronnie would wonder if those two things were ever a good idea to mix together. The lead single from this set, "Still Unbroken," is a decent song, but unfortunately that's about it, although the album has a big, full feel. There just aren't many songs, really, to go with that fullness (*God & Guns* was produced by Bob Marlette) -- "Southern

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Ways" has a certain charm, maybe because it's essentially a slowed-down rewrite of "Sweet Home Alabama" with the same riff as an anchor, and "Floyd" has some ragged atmosphere going for it, but most of the songs here are far from memorable. It ends up feeling like an album that stomps and roars and sounds like Lynyrd Skynyrd but somehow just isn't the same -- maybe because it isn't. ---Steve Leggett, allmusic.com

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