

Jeff Beck & Big Town Playboys - Crazy Legs (1993)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Race With The Devil* [0:02:00.69] 02. *Cruisin'* [0:02:22.40] 03. *Crazy Legs* [0:02:03.60] 04. *Double Talkin' Baby* [0:02:15.10] 05. *Woman Love* [0:02:35.46] 06. *Lotta Lovin'* [0:02:04.76] 07. *Catman* [0:02:24.37] 08. *Pink Thunderbird* [0:02:30.96] 09. *Baby Blue* [0:02:36.93] 10. *You Better Believe* [0:02:09.86] 11. *Who Slapped John?* [0:01:55.50] 12. *Say Mama* [0:02:13.33] 13. *Red Blue Jeans And A Pony Tail* [0:02:18.09] 14. *Five Feet Of Lovin'* [0:02:11.66] 15. *B-I-Bickey-Bi-Bo-Bo-Go* [0:02:12.73] 16. *Blues Stay Away From Me* [0:02:24.10] 17. *Pretty Pretty Baby* [0:02:26.56] 18. *Hold Me, Hug Me, Rock Me* [0:02:15.17] Bass Guitar – Ian Jennings Drums – Clive Deamer Electric Guitar – Jeff Beck Rhythm Guitar [Electric] – Adrian Utley Vocals – Mike Sanchez

Jeff Beck has made many strange albums, but none were ever quite as strange as this. With the Big Town Playboys offering support, Beck rips through 18 Gene Vincent numbers (not "Be-Bop-a-Lula," however), paying tribute to Vincent's guitarist, Cliff Gallup. Beck sounds terrific as he reconstructs Gallup's parts, but he doesn't add anything to the originals. Still, *Crazy Legs* is a fun listen and offers many insights into Beck's playing, if not Gallup's. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, AllMusic Review

Crazy Legs is Jeff Beck's tribute to the player who inspired him to pick up the guitar, Cliff Gallup of Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps. The fact that this collection of rockabilly tunes is also one of the liveliest albums of Beck's long career also underscores the fact that the brilliant guitarist is one of rock's greatest underachievers. Apparently unable to sustain working relationships with players as strong as those in his early groups, Beck has become a top-dollar guitarist for hire who has traded sustained musicality for isolated moments of virtuosity. But slumming with the Big Town Playboys, a respected British revival group, Beck is not just flashy window dressing but the lightning rod in a red-hot combo.

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Beck has said that his biggest challenge in mastering rockabilly, a style that calls for the guitarist to mix single-note runs with snappy clusters of chords, was learning to play without the volume and distortion that has informed his playing since his mid-'60s tenure with the Yardbirds. That's what gives Crazy Legs its swing, for instead of dominating the music with sheer sonic muscle, Beck achieves the same end by bouncing his encyclopedic bag of riffs off a rippling rhythm section of drums and stand-up bass. Throughout these 18 well-chosen selections, Beck is equally apt to whip out a propulsive rhythm ("Lotta Lovin"), a string of arpeggios ("Blues Stay Away From Me") or a wildly scrambled solo ("Cruisin"). If guitarists earned degrees, Crazy Legs would be Beck's thesis toward a doctorate in rockabilly.

Crazy Legs is unlikely to be more than just another odd patch in Beck's crazy-quilt career. Rockabilly, after all, has been a retro novelty ever since the early Beatles covered tunes by Carl Perkins. The Playboys are certainly less self-conscious than the Stray Cats, who enjoyed 15 minutes of fame in the 1980s, though you can bet your ducktail that the Playboys wouldn't be on a major label without Beck on guitar. In that regard, Crazy Legs is oddly akin to Eric Clapton's Unplugged, for in both cases, celebrated guitar gods respectfully re-create the music that had first stirred their passions. Beck doesn't add anything new to the rockabilly vocabulary, but he plays this music as well as it's ever been played. So while Crazy Legs is ultimately redundant, it also rocks like crazy. --- John Milward, rollingstone.com

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