

### Anders Osborne - Peace (2013)



1. *Peace* 6:47 2. *47* 4:44 3. *Let It Go* 4:35 4. *Windows* 4:59 5. *Five Bullets* 3:10 6. *Brush Up Against Me* 2:37 7. *Sentimental Times* 4:53 8. *Dream Girl* 4:23 9. *Sarah Anne* 5:43 10. *I'm Ready* 4:08 11. *My Son* 4:47 Anders Osborne (vocals, guitar, piano) Carl Dufrene (vocals) Jason Mingledorff (clarinet, tenor saxophone) John Gros (French horn, piano, Hammond b-3 organ) Eric Bolivar, Brady Blade (drums) Warren Riker (percussion) Justin Tocket, Susan Cowsill (background vocals)

Blues guitarist Anders Osborne switched gears musically earlier this year with the release of the semi-acoustic six-song EP *Three Free Amigos*. Eschewing the hard-charging, guitar-driven blues-rock thunderstorm of his 2012 album *Black Eye Galaxy*, Osborne's *Three Free Amigos* was like a sun-drenched morning after the rain cleared out. By contrast, he guitarist's *Peace* album manages to walk a fine line between the two recordings – cloudy afternoon music, as it were – Osborne delivering a highly autobiographical set of songs that build upon his trademark roots 'n' blues sound to incorporate elements of funk, psychedelic-rock, even scraps of reggae that evoke memories of the 1970s.

The title track opens the album with a bang, a shimmering cymbal riding low beneath oscillating guitar drone before a doom-laden dark rhythmic groove worthy of *Black Sabbath* kicks in. Actually, Osborne's fuzzy, buzzy fretwork sounds a lot like Neil Young, as do his measured vocals, which float into the song on an acoustic guitar strum. The song's biographical lyrics are delivered rather low-key but hide a deceptive edge only hinted at by the guitar, the singer's inner turmoil as brilliantly expressed as anything penned by such similar roots-music oriented wordsmiths as Young, John Fogerty, or Lowell George. The instrumental break is mesmerizing in its complexity, blues influences hanging over the lyrics more so than the music.

The sprawling, loose-limbed "47" is similar lyrically to "Peace," Osborne delivering his

breathless vocals over a jaunty, reckless rhythm that drives the song forward like a perpetual motion machine, but it's with "Windows" that the guitarist fulfills his rock 'n' roll fantasies. With a strident guitar strum and wailing vocals, Osborne blends a bluesy vibe with an exotic rock soundtrack, the confessional lyrics telling a story that mixes classical mythology with Grateful Dead references, the finality of the chorus strengthened by the haunting vibe of Jason Mingledorff's bleating sax. Osborne's wiry solos sting like a 90-pound wasp, rolling off his fingers with no little urgency themselves, jumping headfirst into the blustery hard rock dirge that is "Five Bullets."

Osborne's "Five Bullets" is both the most political song he's ever penned, as well as one of the most emotionally powerful, the music driven by a rattletrap circular riff that pounds home the seriousness of the lyrics with the subtle grace of a runaway jackhammer. Lest readers forget, hard rock was born of the blues, and there's plenty of blues in the unseen tears cried here, albeit lost amidst the muscular arrangement and bludgeoning soundtrack. "Five Bullets" leads, seamlessly, into the chaotic intro of the mostly-instrumental "Brush Up Against Me," an industrial cacophony grinding along, casting a shadow across odd vocals, blasts of horn, the occasional guitar lick, and who knows what else is hidden in the mix? When Osborne's brief folkie vocals kick in against a madcap backdrop, it's quite jarring, but then the music devolves into territory only a demented genius like Eugene Chadbourne might explore.

Just as "Five Bullets" drops wordlessly into the tone poem that is "Brush Up Against Me," so does the latter song roll unexpectedly into the pastoral "Sentimental Times." At a certain age, mortality creeps up on all of us and nostalgia is often used as a weapon to ward off the evil spirits, and Osborne's "Sentimental Times" is a wistful, almost melancholy reminder of the passing years. The singer's vocals have seldom been more expressive, his subdued guitar playing never more elegant, the song hitting the ears like a cross between early Moody Blues and 1960s-era psych-pop tunesmiths like Emmitt Rhodes or Michael Fennelly. The life-affirming defiance of "I'm Ready" matches a bluesy undercurrent (especially in Osborne's guitarplay) with Dylanesque, word-heavy lyrics and pitch-perfect vocals whereas "My Son" is a loving ode to the next generation, a lilting, peaceful acceptance of, and nod to the future.

In more ways than one, Peace is Anders Osborne's "classic rock" album, the artist feeling, perhaps, like a man out of time. The late 1960s and early '70s were an era where blues music casually informed rock songwriting, with Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf as big an influence on young rockers as Elvis Presley or Bob Dylan. There's little here that the traditionalist would consider even remotely "bluesy" and yet blues music imbues every performance on Peace, hanging around in the corner of the studio like the ghost of a favored ancestor.

And make no mistake, the songs on Peace are haunted by a lot of ghosts, not only those of the long-dead bluesmen and women that placed Osborne on his life's path, but also by his addictions and renewal, his triumphs and his failures. Peace stamps paid to all of Osborne's past, the album a work of staggering lyrical and musical genius that creeps into your consciousness and forces you pay attention. --- Reverend Keith A. Gordon, blues.about.com

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