

Jeff Jensen - Road Worn And Ragged (2013)

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1. *Brunette Woman (Feat Brandon Santini)* 2. *Good Bye Portland (Feat Victor Wainwright)*
3. *Heart Attack & Vine* 4. *Pepper* 5. *Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You* 6. *Little Red Rooster* 7.
Crosseyed Cat (Feat Brandon Santini) 8. *Raggedt Ann (Feat Victor Wainwright)* 9. *River Runs Dry*
10. *Thankful* Jeff Jensen – Vocals, Guitar Bill Ruffino – Bass James Cunningham – Drums
Chris Stephenson – Organ + Victor Wainwright – Piano Brandon Santini – Harmonica

Blues guitarist and songwriter Jeff Jensen closes *Road Worn and Ragged* with "Thankful," a funky/soulful ode to a musical life well-lived; it's a sentiment not often associated with the angsty 3-chord art form that is the blues. But we should all be so thankful for what the blues has given American music, despite its roots in some dark chapters of our country's past. Jeff seems to get that, delivering an album that manages to be heartfelt without being overwrought, respectful of the form without being self-consciously reverential.

Road Worn and Ragged is a solid 10-song set of rootsy modern blues. Originals like "Good Bye Portland" and "Raggedy Ann" (co-penned with Billy Wirtz and Victor Wainwright, respectively) merge classic blues tropes with more contemporary sensibilities. The former tune is a tongue-in-check goodbye to the Port City, lamenting the ubiquitous presence of coffee and clouds; Jensen knows his blues are a little lighter weight than those of his musical forebears, and he's refreshingly honest in that regard. Jeff takes a risk in covering Tom Waits, one of the few genuine latter-day blues poets. It's a risk that pays off though, with his slurred, punchy vocal delivery providing a convincing vehicle for the darkly humorous portrait of urban decay that is "Heart Attack and Vine."

A spirited cover of Willie Dixon's "Red Rooster" includes some meaty guitar and a throaty harmonica solo from Jeff's former bandleader Brandon Santini. Jensen benefits from first-rate

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musical support throughout Road Worn and Ragged, including the bass and drums of regular band members Bill Ruffino and James Cunningham. This is definitely an outfit I want to catch live, if their spirited studio performance is any reflection of stage presence. Blues fans seeking a laid-back but energetic electric blues set should check out this latest effort from Jeff Jensen; it's certainly one of the blues highlights of 2013. --- nodepression.com

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