

The Blues Project - Projections (1966)

Wpisany przez bluesever
Sobota, 05 Styczeń 2019 16:10 -

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A1 I Can't Keep From Crying 4:25 A2 Steve's Song 4:55 A3 You Can't Catch Me 4:14 A4 Two Trains Running 11:20 B1 Wake Me, Shake Me 5:15 B2 Cheryl's Going Home 2:35 B3 Flute Thing 5:58 B4 Caress Me Baby 7:12 B5 Fly Away 3:30 Roy Blumenfeld - Drums
Danny Kalb - Guitar, Vocals Steve Katz - Guitar, Harmonica, Vocals Al Kooper - Keyboards, Vocals Andy Kulberg - Bass, Flute

Produced by Tom Wilson (Dylan, Zappa), the Blues Project's second effort was their finest hour. In less than a year the enthusiastic live band had matured into a seasoned studio ensemble. Steve Katz's features are lightweight folk but Al Kooper reworks two gospel themes ("Wake Me, Shake Me," "I Can't Keep from Crying") into ambitious blues-rock compositions, and Danny Kalb proves he's no mere folkie on extended versions of "Two Trains Running" and "Caress Me Baby." Bassist Andy Kulberg switches to flute and Kalb gets psychedelic on the jazzy "Flute Thing," penned by Kooper. ---Dan Forte, AllMusic Review

The Blues Project were one of the hottest live acts of the time and one of the first album oriented bands. Not all blues, with certain tunes rooted in folk and this album bearing a psychedelic edge (nearly the American "Aftermath") but listen to them cook through some classic blues standards and soulful originals, and the name starts to settle in just fine.

This Greenwich Village group lit up audiences weekly at New York's Au Go Go Cafe. Before they cut their first record, the smokin' hot Live At The Cafe Au Go Go, they were joined by session player Al Kooper who was looking to gig and improve his chops on the Farfisa organ.

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By the time Projections was released, they had become a hard-edged party band that were well-equipped to extend their jams for a drugged out San Fransisco scene, and their eagerness to incorporate other musical forms and experiment beyond the blues put this band ahead of their time.

Al's "Koopерphone" (actually called a Tubon) on Can't Keep From Crying supplies an opening dose of out-of-control psych. A completely unexpected classical suite introduces Steve's Song, a folksy groover with light touches of fuzz. And it's hard to not become a classic '66 record with a track like the hard slow blues, Two Trains Running, running 11 minutes 30 seconds. Another toss-for-a-loop is a Jazz-lounge number featuring Andy Kulberg on the uncleverly named Flute Thing. Cheryl's Going Home is a riff-based standout, but when they perform bluesy shuffles like Wake Me Shake Me and Caress Me Baby you know they've hit their stride. The blues numbers give the album its vintage appeal.

Though they could smoke an audience, they were unable to score a hit song. However, one of the last tracks they cut before Al Kooper left the band may be one of the best unknown singles of the year: No Time Like The Right Time.

The Polydor/Chronicles anthology has the Projections album on disc two, with scores of live material and outtakes from the first album on disc one and detailed liners. ---Brendan, therisingstorm.net

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