

Pinetop Perkins and Willie Big Eyes Smith - Joined at the Hip (2010)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 31 March 2011 08:44 - Last Updated Thursday, 13 June 2013 09:07

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01. *Grown Up To Be A Man* [play](#)
02. *Cut That Out*
03. *Take Your Eyes Off My Woman*
04. *Walkin' Down The Highway*
05. *Gambling Blues*
06. *I Would Like To Have A Girl Like You*
07. *Take My Hand, Precious Lord*
08. *You'd Better Slow Down*
09. *Minor Blues (Instrumental)*
10. *It Feels So Good* [play](#)
11. *Lord, Lord, Lord*
12. *Grindin' Man*
13. *Eyesight To The Blind*

Personnel:

Pinetop Perkins (vocals, piano)
Willie "Big Eyes" Smith (vocals, harmonica)
Little Frank Krakowski, John Primer (guitar)
Bob Stroger (bass guitar)
Kenny Smith (drums)

Pinetop Perkins and Willie "Big Eyes" Smith have been playing together on and off for more than four decades. Both played with Muddy Waters during his '70s resurgence and both continued on without the icon as part of the Legendary Blues Band. They been on record and onstage more times than they can count since but *Joined At The Hip* represents something of a first for the two and that's saying something considering the careers and ages of both men.

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Age may be nothing but a number but the numbers in this case are noteworthy. Willie "Big Eyes" Smith, is the young whippersnapper of this duo at age 74. Joe Willie "Pinetop" Perkins was 96 at the time of this recording and will turn 97 next month, out on the road, touring with Smith in support of their new record. To put that in some kind of historical context, Perkins was born during the William Taft administration, meaning President Barack Obama is the 17th man to serve in the Oval Office during his life.

Now that makes for a great, great story and there is something inspiring about two men in their later years continuing to do what they love. Some fans, critics, and writers will stop right there and declare the album a success just because of how unlikely it is for there to be an album at all. Others will have their knives out for it, convinced these two long ago exhausted any new tricks these two old dogs might have learned.

It's hard not to admire two men who still want to do this and do it the right way and that spirit can be heard between the notes. That desire mixed with their collective experience, knowledge, and understanding of the music is so potent it almost becomes another instrument in the mix. Joining these two in the studio is 78-year old bassist Bob Stroger — winner this year's outstanding bass player award at the Blues Music Awards — and Smith's son, Kenny, on drums. John Primer, another Muddy Waters band alum, joins on lead guitar along with Frank Krakowski.

The album opens with the strutting "Grown Up To Be A Man," a pure Chicago blues number so good it's hard to believe this is its first recording and not the hundredth. Smith's vocals are warm and inviting, the character and blusiness of them coming not from grit or strain but from experience and age. What Perkins has lost in power and agility he makes up for with experience, laying down an elegant bridge when Smith throws it over to him. Perkins works in a couple bars of "Chicken Shack" into "Cut That Out" and later on "You'd Better Slow Down." "Shack" is a song Perkins has been playing for who knows how long and one he continues to play on tour, including in Memphis last month when I saw him. ---Josh Hathaway

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