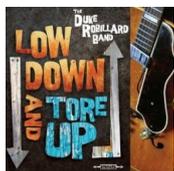


Duke Robillard Band – Low Down and Tore Up (2011)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 01 October 2011 10:53 - Last Updated Sunday, 27 December 2020 13:04

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01. Quicksand (3:12) 02. Train Fare Home (4:35) 03. Mercy Mercy Mama (3:04) [play](#) 04. Overboard (3:18) 05. Blues After Hours (4:33) 06. Want Ad Blues (3:58) 07. Do Unto Others (2:27) 08. It's Alright (3:22) 09. Let Me Play With Your Poodle (2:35)

[play](#)

10. Tool Bag Boogie (3:10) 11. What's Wrong (3:35) 12. I Ain't Mad At You (3:30) 13. Twelve Year Old Boy (4:31) 14. Later For You Baby (3:18)

Duke Robillard (vocals, guitar); Sax Gordon (tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone); Bruce Bears (piano); Brad Hallen (acoustic bass); Mark Teixeira (drums).

Blues records used to routinely sound like this: Loose and fun, almost anarchic in their pursuit of nothing more than good-time joy and real-time emotion. Duke Robillard, co-founder of Roomful of Blues and former member of the Fabulous Thunderbirds, breathes new life into the concept on *Low Down and Tore Up*, to be issued today on Stony Plain Records.

Now 40-plus years into his journey as a band leader and blues songwriter, Robillard has rarely sounded more visceral and present. He claims another piece — no, a chunk, really — of that legacy with every successive spin of his new disc.

Robillard started with some old favorites, even before he began recording them in the old way — tracks that you imagine he punched buttons to hear night after night on an old juke. *Low Down and Tore Up* is dotted with dusty sides from Eddie Taylor, and John Lee Hooker. From Jimmy McCracklin and Guitar Slim. From Tampa Red, Sugarboy Crawford, Pee Wee Clayton and Elmore James. But not the most popular, not the ones that everybody heard until they became featureless. Found objects like Crawford's "What's Wrong," Tampa Red's "Mercy Mercy Mama," Guitar Slim's "Later for You Baby" or McCracklin's "It's Alright" sizzle with new energy, in part, because they haven't become accepted, then threadbare standards.

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Next, Robillard — a well-known gearhead — unplugged a few of his gadgets. He dug out the same old attachable pickup he'd used when he co-founded Roomful more than four decades back, and a 1950s-era Vega amp, and a replica of Pee Wee Crayton's original Strat. Then there is the added sauce of saxophonist Sax Gordon, who blows in a classic old-school honking style. Horn players back in the day performed with a crude salaciousness, and Gordon doesn't just mimic it — he embodies it. He's particularly effective on Taylor's "Train Fare," deftly recalling J.T. Brown's squalling authority inside Elmore James' Broomdusters' band.

Of course, as long as he's been making records, nothing has fit Robillard's open-hearted growl more perfectly than a classic jump-blues. And Robillard, as always, boasts this unselfconsciously spontaneous instrumental acumen on tracks like Pee Wee Crayton's "Blues After Hours." But there's something special going on here, something personal. This is, after all, the music of Robillard's youth — and he plays it with a memorable exuberance, something else that's missing all too often in the careful orthodoxy of modern blues music.

Low Down and Tore Up, instead, is wildly unmannered, open-hearted, free. You're reminded once again that this sound, this uncomplicated verve, this sparky abandon, would become the basis — the stonework foundation — of rock 'n' roll. So clear is its power, Robillard's record almost thrums with nervous energy at times. Not all of that power is musical, either. More than a little bit of it is pure attitude. And that's where Robillard nails it, all of it. He makes you believe in this music, in its power and its magic, all over again. --- Nick DeRiso, somethingelreviews.com

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