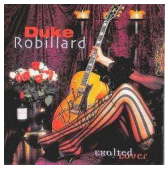
Duke Robillard - Exalted Lover (2003)



01. Down Home Country Girl [0:04:56.62] 02. I'll Never Be Free (with Pam Tillis) [0:03:46.58] 03. Real Live Wire [0:02:53.62] 04. Exalted Lover [0:04:59.39] 05. Deep Inside [0:04:42.69] 06. How Long Has It Been (with Debbie Davies) [0:03:56.27] 07. Tore Up [0:04:12.35] 08. Love Made A Liar Out Of Me [0:04:22.42] 09. Double X Daddy [0:04:35.43] 10. Travelin' Mood [0:03:24.45] Duke Robillard (vocals, guitar, synthesizer, bass) Debbie Davies (vocals, guitar) Pam Tillis (vocals) Doug James (baritone & tenor saxophone) Steve Gordon (tenor saxophone) Scott Aruda (trumpet) Carl Quefurth (trombone) Steve Burk (piano, organ) Jesse Williams (bass) Marty Ballou (acoustic bass) Mark Texiera (drums, percussion)

Duke Robillard's second 2003 release could just as well have been titled Living With the Blues, Part 2, since it picks up where his 2002 album of that name left off. Returning to the Roomful of Blues horn sound (where he began his recording career in 1977), Robillard employs brass on the majority of these rocking blues tracks. In fact, both saxist Doug James and trombone player Carl Querfurth (who play on this album) are Roomful alumni, as is pianist Matt McCabe. The horns are used more for embellishment, though, in contrast to Roomful, where they often define the sound. The opening mid-tempo swamp rock of "Down Home Country Girl" kicks things off in tough form with Robillard's gutsy singing fronting the powerful brass, but a short guitar solo fades out just as it builds up a head of steam. Robillard then branches out into classic R&B territory when he duets with Pam Tillis on a sweet and sassy version of "I'll Never Be Free," a tune made popular by Tennessee Ernie Ford, Dinah Washington, Louis Jordan, and others. Rollicking tracks such as "Real Live Wire," "How Long Has It Been" (a crackling vocal and guitar duet with Debbie Davies, returning the favor of Robillard producing her Love the Game album), and a rockabilly-flavored "Love Made a Liar of Me" keep the mood upbeat. The lounge/jazz swing of the title track (with sensual French spoken-word from Aimee Hill along with Robillard playing a guitar synth that sounds like a trumpet) and "Double X Daddy" brings the disc back to the Roomful days with swanky horn solos. "Deep Inside" hearkens back to classic blues/R&B that Robillard does so well. He adds a stinging, staccato, Albert King-styled solo that stabs through the song and is one of the album's finest leads. A percussion-heavy, Bo Diddley-ized version of James Wayne's "Travelin' Mood" closes out an album that shows a few different

sides of Robillard, but stays closer to his blues and swing roots. He seems to be having a blast throughout, and even though his voice isn't as polished as his guitar skills, he puts across these songs with exuberance and class. It's another excellent entry to an already strong catalog that continues to improve with age. ---Hal Horowitz, allmusic.com

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