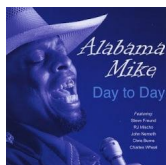


Alabama Mike - Day to Day (2009)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 03 May 2012 19:10 - Last Updated Thursday, 13 May 2021 15:14

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01. *Day to Day* 02. *Death Letter Blues* 03. *Religion* 04. *Naggin* 05. *Lay My Money Down*
06. *Strange Angels* [play](#) 07. *Too Many Cooks* 08. *Knockin on Your Door* 09. *Somethin on My Mind* 10. *I've Been Rocked* 11. *Sara Brown* [play](#)

For his initial release, “Alabama Mike” Benjamin put together a setlist that includes seven of his original tunes plus covers of songs from Elmore James, Willie Dixon and Son House. Benjamin possesses a big , powerful voice that commands your attention. The James influence is evident throughout the disc in superb guitar work from Steve Freund, Jon Lawton (Little Jonny & the Giants) and Charles Wheal (Mark Hummel).

Opening with the title track, Benjamin describes the trials and tribulations facing many Americans in the current economic environment. Lawton contributes some wicked slide guitar licks over the solid rhythmic foundation from Kedar Roy on bass and Scott Silveira on drums. Lawton unleashes a darker attack on the Son House classic, “Death Letter Blues”. Alabama Mike shouts out a spirited vocal that matches Lawton’s intensity. “Naggin” is a funky piece driven by wah-wah effects on Scott Brenton’s guitar. Another Benjamin original, “Lay My Money Down”, rocks with a fierce boogie beat sparked by Chris Burns on piano and more stellar slide guitar from Lawton. “Too Many Cooks” sports a rumba beat and a fiery guitar part from Steve Freund.

Another highlight is the extended workout on “Religion”, a slow blues masterpiece that finds Alabama Mike taking his woman to task for going to church on Sunday and raising hell the rest of the week. His voice soars into the upper register as he pleads for her to be faithful. Wheal plays some nice BB King-style guitar. On “I’ve Been Rocked”, Wheal’s guitar burns over the shuffle beat on another fine tune from Alabama Mike that features excellent harp from John Nemeth. The band slows the pace again on “Somethin On My Mind”. There is plenty of the rich

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tone of RJ Mischo's harp and Burns' piano again accentuates the arrangement.

Alabama Mike covers two lesser-known Elmore James tunes. "Strange Angel" is taken at a medium pace. Benjamin sings with conviction, supported by Barron Shullman on tenor sax and Wheal on guitar. The band rocks harder on "Knockin' at Your Door". Benjamin strains his voice a bit at times trying to match powerful accompaniment. The disc closes with a booming Benjamin vocal on a track in the classic James style. Silveira lays down a strong beat for Lawton's slide guitar while Mischo contributes plenty of hot licks on his harp.

It is a real treat to review a disc this good, especially when it comes from an unknown name. The batch of original tunes on this release serve as proof of Benjamin's skill as a songwriter. Alabama Mike gathered together a strong supporting cast of veteran musicians who inject each cut with an authentic blues sound., topped off by Benjamin's inspired vocals. Look for this disc to gather plenty of well-deserved attention for Alabama Mike, who may be an early contender for the Best New Artist award. This one is highly recommended !!! --- Mark Thompson, Crossroads Blues Society in Rockford. IL

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