

The Mike Henderson Band – If You Think It's Hot Here (2014)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)

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The Mike Henderson Band – If You Think It's Hot Here (2014)



1 I Want To Know Why 4:28 2 Send You Back To Georgia 4:22 3 It's Alright 3:55 4 If You Think It's Hot Here 5:57 5 Weepin' And Moanin' 5:39 6 Mean Red Spider 4:48 7 Possession 6:37 8 Unseen Eye 5:00 9 Matchbox 3:05 10 Gambling Blues 5:37 11 Rock House Blues 2:02 Backing Vocals – Chris Stapleton (tracks: 4), Morgane Stapleton (tracks: 4) Bass Guitar – Michael Rhodes Drums – Pat O'Connor Guitar [Additional Musician] – Don Underwood (tracks: 4) Lead Vocals, Guitar, Harmonica – Mike Henderson Piano, Organ [B3] – Kevin McKendree

Blues fans may recall guitarist Mike Henderson from the two well-received recordings he released with his band the Bluebloods more than fifteen years ago. Some people may remember him as the original guitar player for the Bel Airs. Other listeners may have heard his two country projects or more recently his part in the popular bluegrass band, the Steeldrivers. Henderson is also an accomplished songwriter with a number of hits to his credit including “Powerful Stuff,” done by the Fabulous Thunderbirds. You can count Emmylou Harris and John Hiatt among the artists who have utilized Henderson’s guitar skills on their own album projects.

For his first release on the EllerSoul label, Henderson is back playing the kind of low-down blues that would be the perfect soundtrack for a night in any beer-soaked roadhouse across the country. The disc opens with the dark, foreboding sound of his slide guitar on “I Wanta Know Why,” followed by the first of two Hound Dog Taylor covers. “Send You Back To Georgia” gets a rousing treatment with Kevin McKendree, formerly with Delbert McClinton, pounding the piano with the gusto of Jerry Lee Lewis before Henderson uses his slide guitar to whip things into a frenzy. Michael Rhodes on bass and Pat O’Connor on drums create the propulsive drive on “It’s Alright,” with McKendree’s rollicking solo eclipsed by some rambunctious slide from the leader.

The disc has a darker-hued, foreboding sound that works particularly well on the Robert

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Johnson classic, "If I Had Possession". Henderson's fingers dance around the fretboard on the taut opening segment. Then the band joins in, setting up a loose shuffle behind some stirring barrelhouse piano from McKendree. A rough-hewn version of "Mean Red Spider" features a straight-forward, sturdy vocal from Henderson bolstered by McKendree's sparkling runs. The pace slows on Sonny Boy Williamson's "Unseen Eye," with Henderson's stinging licks creating a web of pain & sorrow. On the title track, he wonders what is in store for those who leave this life only to find the pearly gates shut tight.

Other standout tracks include the original "Weepin' and Moanin'," with McKendree channeling the best of the traditional Chicago blues piano style. Henderson unleashes another string-bending gem of a solo over the swaggering pace of "Gambler's Blues," giving us a ferocious reminder of the perils of trying to beat the odds. A soul-shaking take of "Matchbox" rocks with the intensity of a sanctified preacher. "Rock House Blues" closes the disc with Henderson blowing some harp over relaxed, steady-rolling accompaniment from McKendree's piano.

If you are ever in Nashville on a Monday night, make a point to get to the Bluebird Café to hear Mike Henderson tearing it up live & in-person. Just make sure you get there real early if you want to get a foot inside the door. In the meantime, grab a copy of this release, turn it up loud and enjoy a band with a no-frills approach powered by the instrumental prowess of Henderson & McKendree. Heartily recommended! ---Mark Thompson, bluesblastmagazine.com

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