

Mary Lane - Travelin' Woman (2019)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 28 September 2019 15:40 -

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1 *Travelin' Woman* 4:44 2 *Ain't Gonna Cry No More* 3:44 3 *Leave That Wine Alone* 4:38
4 *Some People Say I'm Crazy* 3:40 5 *Raining in My Heart* 3:26 6 *Let Me Into Your Heart*
4:09 7 *Ain't Nobody Else* 2:40 8 *Blues Give Me A Feeling* 3:27 9 *Bad Luck And Trouble*
3:39 10 *Make Up Your Mind* 4:14 Mary Lane - vocals Billy Branch, Corky Siegel, Eddie
Shaw - harmonica Colin Linden, Dave Specter - guitar Jim Tullio, Sam Butler, John Rice, Bill
Ruppert, Shedrick Davis - guitars Larry Beers, Gene "Daddy G" Barge - Sax Don Tenuto -
trumpet Travis T. Bernard - drums

New label Women Of The Blues makes a big noise this week with the March 8th release of *Travelin' Woman*, a new 10-song collection from Chicago Blues Hall of Fame singer, Mary Lane, produced by Grammy-winner Jim Tullio. On her first new album in over 20 years, the 83-year-old Lane steps to the mic with the kind of confidence and casual mastery that can only be acquired by decades of commitment to the Blues life.

We here at Rock and Blues Muse have been excited about this record since January when Martine's story about Mary Lane came out. And as if that wasn't enough, prepare yourself also for the upcoming documentary film "I Can Only Be Mary Lane" which will chronicle her life and her decades as a fixture in the Chicago Blues scene.

But back to the music at hand. As you would expect, this entire collection is a showcase for Mary Lane's smooth, soulful stylings and distinctive voice. Creating the canvas for her performance is no shortage of top-notch studio players and special guests.

If you need an introduction to her, Mary provides it with the solid and occasionally rollicking

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opening/title track "Travelin' Woman," where she tells you her story in some of the plainest and most powerful English possible. The band really gets down to business on "Ain't Gonna Cry No More." Powered by Chris "Hambone" Cameron's piano, this is the kind of chugging, straight-up Chicago style blues that Lane has been singing in low dives to big halls for years. Next up "Some People Say I'm Crazy" is another up-tempo workout, this time featuring Corky Siegal's edgy harmonica adding punctuation to Lane's vocals. I really wish Jake and Elwood were still around to cover the hell out of this one.

In a tale as old as the Blues itself "Raining In My Heart" tells the story of another no-good man who doesn't know the special thing he is letting slip through his fingers as Sam Butler's buzzy guitar tone adds bite to the instrumental parts. Mary Lane takes things to an even more open/broken-hearted place on the plaintive and soul-soaked "Let Me Into Your Heart." She then turns the tables on the ballsy and defiant "Ain't Nobody Else" where she reminds that no-good man just what she has to offer – which is more than any man deserves.

Lane sums up her autobiography and the Chicago blues itself in the first line of "Blues Give Me a Feeling" when she sings "I was born in the country, and they brought me to the city." You hear both influences in this tune too; the framework of old school blues laid over those insistent, big-shouldered Chicago rhythms. The extended harmonica break provided by Indira Sfair is icing on the cake. Lane and the band can even make "Bad Luck and Trouble" sound like a time too good to pass up; with every player putting a little something extra behind every note, all the way to the last measure.

The tone and tempo definitely shift on the haunted bare-bones album closer "Make Up Your Mind." Accompanied solely by Colin Linden's acoustic slide Dobro and a foot-stomp bass beat, this is as authentic an old-school Blues lament as you're gonna find anywhere in 2019. In no hurry to close out the proceedings, Lane makes use of every year and decade of her experience as she emotes sincerely through every line of the lyrics while still leaving enough room for Linden's tightly meshed slide work.

The blues is about perseverance, about never backing down from the challenges that life throws at you and, when they do knock you flat, it is about getting back up again. When Mary Lane sings her Blues you know she's been knocked down more times, and in more ways, than you or I will ever know, but she's always risen back up. Now in her 80s she is still on the rise. That is something we can all salute. This might be the best pure Blues vocal album you'll hear all year.
---Martine Ehrenclou, rockandbluesmuse.com

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