

Tomas Doncker Band - Moanin' at Midnight: The Howlin' Wolf Project (2014)

Written by bluesever

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1-Evil 2-Killing Floor 3-Back Door Man 4-Moanin' At Midnight 5-Spoonful 6-Blind Melon Morpheus 7-Shookdown 8-I Ain't Superstitious 9-Smokestack Lightning 10-Moanin' At Midnight (Ras Jah Ames Dub Mix) Members/Instruments: Tomás Doncker-Vocals,Guitar David Barnes-Harmonica,Vocals Nick Rolfe-Organ,Keyboards, Vocals James Dellatacoma-Guitar Josh David-Bass, Vocals Michael Faulkner-Drums, Vocals Damon Duewhite-Drums, Vocals Mark Henry-Sax

Internationally renowned guitarist and vocalist Tomás Doncker has worked with such greats as Bootsy Collins and Ivan Neville. His newest release, *Moanin' at Midnight: The Howlin' Wolf Project* (True Groove, 2014), a tribute to blues legend Chester Burnett, otherwise known as Howlin' Wolf, has all the raw energy that a blues record like this needs. The intensity and swagger with which he and his band approach the music really do justice to the spirit of the man they're celebrating, which is no easy feat when the man in question was as imposing as Howlin' Wolf.

In terms of arrangements, Doncker and his band wisely don't attempt to reinvent the wheel; they recognize that the essence of the music is the feel and they tap into it expertly. That being said, the group's sound is much more modern and rock influenced than Howlin' Wolf's, particularly Doncker's Hendrix influenced guitar tone and playing. Their collective sound is heavily affected by psychedelic rock and funk ala Parliament Funkadelic . The first track, Dixon's classic "Evil," kicks things off with a lot of energy and a driving guitar riff that puts a unique spin on the well known blues standard. The next couple tracks slow down and get into the gritty, backbeat-driven feel that make this album so enjoyable to listen to. With Doncker's soulful vocals and David Barnes' wailing harmonica playing, "Killing Floor" and "Back Door Man" really capture the energy of these Howlin' Wolf classics.

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Other Highlights of this record include the up-tempo, gospel inflected "I Ain't Superstitious," a really fun take on Howlin Wolf's version, which is significantly slower. The groove is infectious and the phenomenal harmonica solo that closes that track make this one stand out. Speaking of harmonica playing, "Blind Melon Morpheus," an unaccompanied harmonica solo that sets up "Shook Down" is another great moment on the record. Perhaps my favorite cut is the band's funky version of "Moanin' at Midnight."

Tomás Doncker and his band's original takes on these well known blues classics stay true to the spirit of the music while they don't compromise their own group sound. Moanin' at Midnight is sure to please any fan of funky blues rock music. ---Paul Naser, allaboutjazz.com

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