## Mississippi Fever - Mississippi Fever (2010)




*1. Nothin But the Blues 4:16 2. High Heels and A Mini Skirt 3:00 3. It Keeps Raining 3:18 4. I Ain't Superstitious 3:12 5. Bad Intentions 5:05 6. Devonshire Blues 3:47 7. Domino Shuffle 2:55 8. What You Need 3:35 9. Messin With the Kid 3:35 10. Too Much Alcohol 4:42 11. Devonshire Blues (Acoustic Version) 3:40* Brent Barker – guitar, vocals Ted May – bass Tom May – drums, percussion

The experience of seeing live blues music — preferably late at night in a sweaty club after a night of boozing and carousing — is a five-senses experience that can't be re-created on disc. And so as a rule, it's a struggle for nearly every blues band to catch the fire of a live show in the sterility of a recording studio. On its debut album, blues trio Mississippi Fever sounds a little dry in places but manages to throw in a few surprises.

Guitarist and lead singer Brent Barker's voice is clear and strong, which is both good and bad: He's on key and sings in a pleasing tenor, but there's very little grit or grime. Whether he's threatening a fellow suitor on "Too Much Alcohol" or singing of his dark side on "Bad Intentions," Barker simply sounds like too nice of a guy. He'd rather buy you a bottle of beer than break it over your head for looking sideways at his gal. And, mostly, that's fine — roadhouse blues fetishism is a losing game — but the singer and the song don't always jell.

But guitar playing is at least as important as lyrics in blues music (if not more so), and Barker's lead work is strong and varied. Perhaps more than any other genre, electric blues music is guilty of overusing riffs, rhythms and chord progressions, and while much of this album relies on well-worn tropes, there are some sparks. The instrumental "Domino Shuffle" offers a bit more jazzy swing and gives drummer Tom May a chance to display tasteful accents. The next track, "What You Need," uses boilerplate lover-man blues lyrics but employs a chunkier guitar sound that is thickened with a wah-wah pedal and is reminiscent of modern-rock guitar stylings. But

Mississippi Fever is at its best with standard twelve-bar blues; "Devonshire Blues" is the finest example of that style. (The band seems to agree: Both an acoustic and electric version appear on the disc.) The song is a riff on that standard "woman done me wrong" theme, but it strikes the perfect balance between sharp and heartfelt. --- Christian Schaeffer, riverfronttimes.com

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