## Samantha Fish - Black Winds Howlin' (2013)




*1 Miles To Go 2 Kick Around 3 Go To Hell 4 Sucker Born 5 Over You 6 Who's Been Talkin' 7 Lay It Down 8 Let's Have Some Fun 9 Heartbreaker 10 Foolin' Me 11 Black Wind Howlin' 12 Last September* Bass – Charlie Wooton Drums – Yonrico Scott Producer, Guitar, Vocals – Mike Zito Vocals, Guitar – Samantha Fish + Fiddle – Bo Thomas Harmolnica - Jumpin' Johnny Sansone Vocals - Paul Thorn

Kansas City's Samantha Fish has enjoyed a pretty meteoric rise over the last few years. She was part of the Ruf Records 'Girls With Guitars' package alongside Danni Wilde and Cassie Taylor, has played on the Blues Cruise and recorded a debut CD with Mike Zito at the controls. For her sophomore release Mike returns as producer but this time around he has brought along some of his colleagues from The Royal Southern Brotherhood: Yonrico Scott on drums and Charlie Wootton on bass. Mike adds occasional guitar and vocals, Paul Thorn sings on one track, Jumpin' Johnny Sansone plays harp on two and Bo Thomas plays fiddle on one. All the material bar one track is original, Mike Zito co-writing one song.

On her debut album there were arguably too many gentle songs but this time around there is a tougher edge, well exemplified by the opening cut "Miles To Go" which starts the album at a terrific pace, Samantha cutting loose on her cigar box guitar over a frenetic rhythm, a song about being on the road, travelling long distances to meet one's obligations. "Sucker Born" features Johnny Sansone's harp and Samantha's strong vocals on a song about the 'disease' of gambling. There is quite an angry feel to this one, as there is on "Go To Hell", the co-write with Mike Zito and a shared vocal with Paul Thorn. Samantha's guitar digs deep in her solo, the wah-wah matching the angry tone of the lyrics. The title track "Black Wind Howlin'" is the longest track here and finds Samantha harmonising with her own slide playing before cutting loose on guitar on a song that owes something to the North Mississippi Hill Country Blues tradition.

Those who like Samantha's gentler side will love "Over You" on which the shimmering background guitars sound like organ accompaniment while Samantha's lead lines are effective in conveying the emotion of the song. In similar vein, the album closer "Last September" finds Samantha in almost country mode, a feeling reinforced by Bo Thomas' fiddle playing and Samantha's single note plucking. Howling Wolf's "Who's Been Talking?" is also covered in relaxed mode, Johnny Sansone's harp working extremely well with Samantha's vocals. "Let's Have Some Fun" is an acoustic piece but Samantha's strong vocal makes you forget that as she tells us how she's "…not your sweet little girl, I'm not your friend, not anymore."

"Heartbreaker" is a catchy rocker in which the lyrics are almost a response to "Let's Have Some Fun" as here it's the guy who is always likely to let Samantha down, so she gets rid of him first! Some excellent slide playing here is well supported by some explosive drumming. "Foolin' Me" ploughs a similar furrow lyrically with strong vocals and a good hook. "Lay It Down" is another mid-paced rocker with an insistent riff and a cautionary tale: "Devil's knocking at my door, I ain't home, it's just a quarter past four, 'cause me and Jimmy been sitting at the bar, drinking gin and playing cards. Got the ace up his sleeve, got a pistol on my side and if he pulls first I'm gonna give it to him right." Is it always like this on a Saturday night out with Samantha, one wonders? Possibly the strongest cut on the album is "Kick Around" on which Mike Zito contributes the lead guitar part, a really catchy number with some upbeat country accents and a rousing chorus.

This is an accomplished album which will certainly help to cement Samantha's growing reputation in the blues and blues-rock world. ---John Mitchell, bluesblastmagazine.com

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