

Sunny Lowdown - Down Loaded (2017)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Down Loaded* 3:24 2. *Before I Leave This Town* 2:27 3. *I Have My Troubles* 3:36 4. *A Girl I Once Knew* 2:37 5. *Gambling Blues* 2:47 6. *Down Baby* 3:02 7. *Ramblin' and Wanderin'* 3:15 8. *You Never Can Tell* 2:21 9. *Wondering and Worrying* 2:48 10. *Texting Blues* 2:41 11. *Rockin' My Boat* 4:05 12. *That's Enough* 3:15 Sunny Lowdown - solo performer

Some people might have a hard time imagining guitarist Louie X. Erlanger as a blues musician, given that he was a member of Mink Deville, a band that straddled the line between punk and rock, with plenty of soulful touches. What most people don't know is that Erlanger was a sideman to John Lee Hooker, played with other legendary blues artists, and produced award-winning projects for R.L. Burnside and Paul Oscher. He definitely has a feel for the music.

That becomes apparent when you listen to the second release under his Sunny Lowdown persona. The first seven tracks are solo acoustic tracks delivered with Erlanger's somber vocals. The title track opens the disc with some fine finger-picking, followed by "Before I Leave This Town," which has a distinct Burnside influence. On "A Girl I Once Knew," Lowdown switches to slide guitar, playing some taut licks over a droning rhythm.

The slide is also utilized on the traditional tune, "Ramblin' and Wanderin'," that pays homage to the Muddy Waters sound. A cover of the Lightnin' Hopkins number, "Down Baby," is a harrowing lament peppered with more intricate picking. Lowdown creates a chilling portrayal of a man swirling in a sea of despair on J.B. Lenoir's "I Had My Trouble". The energy level picks up considerably on "Gambling Blues," a Li'l Son Jackson tune with a forceful vocal.

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While the acoustic tracks are slower, dark odes to life, the final five cuts step things up several notches with the addition of a rhythm section and a switch to electric guitar. "You Can Never Tell" is a snappy shuffle, followed by "Wondering and Worrying," built on a standard progression with Lowdown blowing like Jimmy Reed on his harp. "Texting Blues" is a humorous look at some of the issues of communication in modern relationships.

The rhythm section members are listed as Sunny Bottoms on bass and Sunny Tubbs on drums. There is nothing to indicate if it is Lowdown himself playing the rhythm or both are real, but unidentified, musicians. Either way, the steady-rolling nature of "Rockin' My Boat" is catchy enough to stick with you. The final track, "That's Enough," shows that Lowdown can handle a guitar, riffing with gusto while Sunny Keys adds some flavor on an electric keyboard.

Sunny Lowdown's latest is a solid offering from a guitarist who is equally at home in acoustic and electric settings, avoiding the traps of excessive volume and endless runs of notes that go nowhere. This one is made for listeners who relish real, traditional blues, served up by an artist who has learned from some of the greats. ---Mark Thompson, bluesblastmagazine.com

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