

Kelly Richey - Sweet Spirit (2013)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 09 May 2016 15:56 -

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01. *Feelin' Under* [0:03:02.45] 02. *I Went Down Easy* [0:03:22.07] 03. *Leavin' It All Behind* [0:02:22.17] 04. *Something's Going On* [0:03:36.60] 05. *Everybody Needs a Change* [0:03:56.01] 06. *Fast Drivin' Mama* [0:03:03.70] 07. *One Way Ticket* [0:03:01.61] 08. *Risin' Sun* [0:03:33.71] 09. *Dyin'* [0:02:46.41] 10. *Hard Workin' Woman* [0:02:51.02] Kelly Richey – guitar, vocals Freekbass - bass Bernie Worrell - keyboards J. Tom Hnатов – keyboards Robby Cosenza – drums Duane Lundy - percussion

“Sweet Spirit” rock and rolls across blues, funk, hip hop and straight up in-your-face rock and roll. Dishing up epic grooves and dirty crunchy guitar riffs, the ten-track album is rolled into a concise set of all-original songs that deftly mix brutish blues guitar and gritty swagger for foot-stomping rockers that shake and shimmy along within a stripped down but massive wall of sound. Pure vintage guitar tone, monster bass lines, and John Bonham-style drum grooves are augmented with Richey’s brawny gravel-studded vocals to produce her mightiest work yet. Richey sings with a competent authority and her down-and-dirty guitar grumble doesn’t disappoint. Richey has picked up the tempo on this album taking inspiration from the Black keys, R.L. Burnside, and The White Stripes, exploding with a raw, well-honed calculation that doesn’t sugarcoat or make excuses. Supported by engineer/producer Duane Lundy, Richey’s leave-blood-on-the-floor raw energy is highlighted rather than slick, polished out production, and gives a nod to Richey’s Led Zeppelin influenced core. Featuring Freekbass on bass guitar, Robby Cosenza on drums, and Bernie Worrell lending a shot of tasty keys, “Sweet Spirit” packs a potent knock-out punch that leaves Richey standing her ground as a serious, balls-to-the-wall, unapologetic rocker. ---cdbby.com

Looks can be deceiving, and so can the titles of blues albums. From seeing the mystical cover

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art of “Sweet Spirit,” the latest release from Lexington, Kentucky native Kelly Richey, one might expect to hear gentle melodies interspersed with the sounds of nature. Au contraire: This is a guitar album. Richey’s guitar style is more reminiscent of Jimi Hendrix than Joan Jett, and her vocal style like Janis Joplin rather than Janis Ian. Her whiskey-gravel vocals bear the wear and tear of the 800,000 miles she’s traveled in her thirty-five year career, and her electric shredder is lush with raucous riffs, sans long guitar solos on this outing. She is a masterful guitarist, but one would be remiss to call her a pure-blues musician. The ten songs on “Sweet Spirit” are take-no-prisoners hard rocking tracks, infused with blues and funk. Out of the three original selections below, two are most representative of the blues, and the third is a poignant ballad with a funky bass beat:

Track 02: “I Went Down Easy”--This tale of recovery from sweet love gone sour isn’t fit for Oprah or Dr. Phil. It’s a growling, wailing blues-rock anthem whose final guitar notes are an ominous death rattle. “I once fell to pieces,” Kelly admits with no sugar coating her vocal cords. “I fell so hard that I cried and cried. But I learned what I had to learn, and thank God I didn’t die.”

Track 05: “Everybody Needs a Change”--Listen very closely to the lyrics on this fifth song, a moving plea for reconciliation in the face of violence. Richey almost whispers this chilling refrain: “People are fighting all around the world, killing each other and I don’t know why. Tell me what it’s going to take to make us see. Tell me what it takes to even make us cry.” Bringing eighties rocker Alannah Myles of “Black Velvet” fame to mind, Kelly cools her usual tempo down a bit without losing one bit of her passion. She tenderly reminds us that “What’s been wrong can be right, even if it takes a fight.”

Track 10: “Workin’ Hard Woman”--More than any other offering on “Sweet Spirit,” this one sums Kelly Richey up: “I’ve no rings on my fingers, I’ve got no bells on my toes. I’m just a workin’ hard woman, and I know what I know.” She also plays the best blues guitar solo out of all ten songs, while keyboardist Robert Lee Carroll and percussionist Dave Farris back her up. ---
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