

Mark May Band & The Soul Satyr Horns - Blues Heaven (2016)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 17 December 2016 15:55 -

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01. *Boom Boom* (4:39) 02. *Money* (6:18) 03. *She's a Keeper* (4:29) 04. *Blues Heaven* (6:35) 05. *Put Down That Poison* (5:04) 06. *Leaving Houston* (5:30) 07. *Boomerang* (7:31) 08. *I'm Her Fool* (7:31) 09. *Gulf Coast Woman* (5:06) 10. *All I Ever Do* (5:56) 11. *Garden of Truth* (6:50) 12. *Kind of Girl* (6:06) 13. *Almost Like a Suicide* (5:57) Mark May – vocals, guitar Dave Absalom – guitar Tim Keefe – bass Gary Jorgenson – drums

Mark May's *Blues Heaven* swings hard through an array of styles. His playing is often redolent of the late, great Albert Collins and his tunes swing with joy and verve. The music is grounded in true blues roots but not stuck in a purist trap of stiffness. ---Alan Paul, cdbaby.com

I distinctly recall the instant 21 years ago while shooting pool when the ripping “You’re Leaving Baby” from Mark May and the Agitators’ debut, *Call on the Blues*, shot me straight up to blues heaven. They had it all—May’s fervent guitar and strong, likeable voice, with great songs cut by a band that melted Chicago blues with Southern-styled heat. In places they stung like Albert Collins, one of May’s heroes. But the album also displayed May’s affinity for the country, Southern rock and old time rock ‘n roll he grew up on during his formative years in Ohio. In fact, May had a dream come true in 2000 when he was asked by another of his idols, Dickey Betts, to join the reconstituted Great Southern after Betts left the Allman Brothers Band.

Two decades and six solo albums later, all those red-hot ingredients in May’s roiling melting pot came together as an even more tasty stew, nonstop through the 13 songs and 77 minutes of *Blues Heaven*. Throughout it, he tackles sticky personal struggles and many moments of joy

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with familiar ease and fiery piss and vinegar. And he obviously had a hell of a lot of fun in the process. Right from the start with “Boom Boom,” well-trod Windy City blues grooves and notions of his hot and irresistible lady get reinvented with passion, for maximum enjoyment. Pumping horns accentuate her strut in pumps. “She’s a Keeper” then plies a jubilant Texas/Louisiana melody, the slide guitar of guest Kentucky Headhunter Greg Martin adding the perfect slippery bite. Gulf Coast melodies also light up “Put Down That Poison,” the most foot-stomping tune about the bad stuff you’ll hear this year, and “Leaving Houston,” which sounds like a swinging tribute to the late, great Long John Hunter. May plays like a stoked-up jazz master throughout it all, and he surely tips his hat to Mr. Betts’ melodicism in the sprawling, soulful “Blues Heaven.” Blues Heaven reintroduces a world-class artist. A very welcome back, Mark. ---Tom Clarke, elmoremagazine.com

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