

## Dennis Jones - Both Sides of the Track (2016)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Enjoy the Ride* (03:46) 02. *It All Depends* (03:32) 03. *Better than Him* (03:16) 04. *Nobodys Slave* (03:51) 05. *Mr Right* (06:25) 06. *The Machine* (06:22) 07. *Number Two* (03:31) 08. *Skin and Bone* (03:49) 09. *When Youre Not Around* (04:04) 10. *What* (03:16) 11. *Shines On You* (03:59) 12. *I Cant Stop* (02:48) 13. *Lonely Joint* (02:21) Dennis Jones – guitar, vocals Dale Black – bass Raymond Johnson – drums + Jimmy Z Zavala – saxophone, harmonica Teddy Zigzag – Hammond B3 organ Michael Turner – drums; Samuel Corraea – bass (track 3)

Both Sides Of The Track is the fifth album from L.A.-based Dennis Jones and it's a meaty slab of guitar-led modern blues-rock with a solid helping of funk on the side.

Ably supported by the dynamic rhythm section of Dale Black on bass and Raymond Johnson on drums, singer-guitarist Jones (who also wrote all the tracks) serves up 13 tracks that cover the full range of the blues-rock spectrum. At one end, there's the balls-to-the-wall rock of "It All Depends" with its ascending start-stop verse chord progression and the wah-driven "Nobody's Slave" where Jones sings with barely-concealed fury over the top of a descending chord progression that wouldn't sound out of place on a Guns & Roses' album. At the other end, there's the upbeat acoustic guitar and harp of "What" and the modern acoustic shuffle of "Lonely Joint" with its striking lyrical image, ostensibly of a joint falling out of someone's pocket onto the street but with the clear undertone addressing the wider societal problem of homelessness.

Jones sings in a smooth, warm, powerful baritone, which is especially effective on the gentler "When You're Not Around." He also plays incendiary lead guitar, firing licks and solos across the tracks like a modern day Johnny Winter.

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The heart of the album is muscular blues-rock, as on “Skin And Bone”, where Jones artfully contrasts acoustic verses with roaring riff-driven choruses before a full band breakdown for the start of his solo, which slowly builds back up again to the ferocious chorus. But Jones and his compadres are equally impressive on the funky uptown blues shuffle of “Number Two”, the Albert King-esque slow blues of “Mr Right” or when dialing back the overdrive, as on the funky “Better Than Him”, where the results are particularly outstanding.

“The Machine” hints at Jimi Hendrix in its wah’ed guitar and pounding drums, with its angry lyrical observation that ““The American dream is fading fast, do you feel free [cue bitter laugh from Jones]? Free at last?” Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan (both for the solos) and Jimmy Page (for the song dynamics) are indicative of some of the more discernable influences on Both Sides Of The Track.

And, while Jones’ band is ostensibly a trio, he cleverly uses over-dubs as well as guest appearances from Jimmy Z Zavala on harmonica (“What”) and saxophone (“Enjoy The Ride”) and Teddy Zigzag on the B3 organ (“When You’re Not Around”) to add flavour and texture to the overall sound.

This album makes it clear that Dennis Jones must be an amazing experience in a live setting, particularly in the band’s clever use of dynamics. But this is not meant as a criticism of the CD. With well-constructed songs, smart lyrics, excellent production and ferocious playing, there is a lot to enjoy on Both Sides Of The Track. If you are a fan of modern blues-rock, you’ll definitely want to hear Dennis Jones. ---bluesblastmagazine.com

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