

Jay Jesse Johnson - Set The Blues On Fire (2015)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Hell Or High Water* 2 *Ghosts In Texas* 3 *Since My Baby's Gone* 4 *Wheelhouse Boogie* 5 *Set The Blues On Fire* 6 *Midnight Dream* 7 *Voodoo Woman* 8 *Don't Mess With Baby* 9 *If I Knew Then* 10 *Ace In The Hole* 11 *Grinding Blues* 12 *Rio De Los Sueños (River Of Dreams)* Bass Guitar – Reed Bogart Drums – Jeff Donaldson Guitar, Vocals – Jay Jesse Johnson Keyboards – Lee Evans

Set The Blues On Fire is the fifth solo album by Ohio native Jay Jesse Johnson. With a equal parts Robin Trower like explosiveness, some Foghat hard boogie blues and influences from the British Blues Explosion that clearly influenced artists like Bonamassa, JJJ set serves up 12 tracks that deliver on the title tracks promise. From some smokin' slow blues and fast paced rocking boogie they set the blues on fire from both ends.

Bassist Reed Bogart and drummer Jeff "Smokey" Donaldson combine to deliver a tight rhythm section accompanying JJJ's guitar throughout this fast-paced, energetic thrill ride that the majority of this album is going to take you on. The frighteningly fast boogie of "Hell or High Water" declares that this band is here to rock you right from the start. The next track "Ghosts of Texas" is where the work of keyboardist Lee Evans work is most prominent with some great organ playing. There is a definite SRV Reese Wynans feel to this one. "Since My Baby's Gone" is a captivating slow blues with a beautiful guitar tone reminiscent with just that little delay and hint of echo of Gary Moore. The boogie train takes off again with "Wheelhouse Boogie" where the slower pace really lets JJJ take the time to make that guitar groan and growl during the choruses.

Another slower but positively rocking blues is delivered with "Midnight Dream" where the band lays down a rhythm and just lets JJJ go to town for an first-rate solo in the middle. A powerful rhythm section that sets a slightly funky yet ominously dark tone to the warning of "Don't Mess

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With Baby.” “If I Knew Then” is a slow burning blues that should not be missed. From there the thrill ride drops off the edge of the precipice with the fast paced “Ace In The Hole.” “Grinding Blues” is exactly what is describes. However, the highlight of this album is the instrumental closing track “Rio de los Suenos (River of Dreams)” which has all the beautiful feel, mood, and superior tone of something you would expect to hear from Eric Johnson. This is truly an amazing song where JJJ shows the depth of his guitar mastery.

With excellent songwriting of Set The Blues On Fire and the killer tone that he can wring out of his Strat, Jay Jesse Johnson delivers a clear message to everyone that he is here to ignite the flame of the candle placing him on the blues-rock altar. ---Kevin O'Rourke, bluesrockreview.com

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