

Dawn Tyler Watson - Mad Love (2019)

Written by bluesever

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01. Alligator (Feat. Steve Marriner) 02. Don't Make Me Mad 03. Feels Good 04. This & That 05. You're The Only One For Me (Feat. Ben Racine) 06. Bad Seed (Feat. Steve Hill) 07. Masochistic Heart 08. Lost 09. Away Too Fast 10. Love To Burn 11. I Look Good 12. The River 13. Alligator Outro (Hidden Track) Dawn Tyler Watson - vocals Ben Racine - guitar, vocals Kaven Jalbert, Little Frankie Thiffault - tenor saxophone Mat "Moose" Mousseau - baritone saxophone François Dubé - bass Nicky Estor - blues Charles Trudel - organ, piano Steve Marriner - harmonica Nicolas Boulay - trumpet Steve Hill - guitar

Declaring her independence on the simmering, soulful ballad "Feels Good," off her sultry and sassy new album Mad Love, Canadian blues songstress Dawn Tyler Watson belts out the words, "Get yourself out of my house/I've had enough." Harnessing powerful emotions, her strong, assured vocals are backed by a slowly building wall of inspiring sound, as the entirety of "Feels Good" sways, but stands firm like a mighty oak. Nobody is pushing her around either.

Perfectly titled, Mad Love is inflamed, passionate and defiant, with occasional bouts of tender vulnerability and obsession, as Watson—two decades into a critically acclaimed career—continues honing her songwriting craft and performance artistry. Matters of the heart and everyday ups and down are explored with the kind of simple honesty and insight that comes from living life to the fullest, and the full force of her lyrics hits like wrecking ball. Musically, Mad Love can be silky smooth and full-bodied, or it can be rip-roaringly raw. The feverish slab of electrified blues-rock that is "Alligator" opens Mad Love with its honking guitar and sweaty harmonica, as Watson and company come out swinging. The boisterous, show-stopping "This and That" is another Watson original, a big, audacious blues brawl of wandering piano, bold horns and strutting confidence that is every bit as infectious as "Masochistic Heart," a tight, pumping R&B blowout driven by bright brass, snappy drums and surging organ.

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Watson is surrounded by a rich mélange of instrumentation on Mad Love, with savvy arrangements creating a sophisticated blues that absorbs other genres with ease. A sunny, New Orleans vibe permeates the herky-jerky languor of “Don’t Make Me Mad” and the pleading “You’re the Only One,” both oozing warmth and written by others. While her band displays righteous chops and steady chemistry, it is Watson’s personality that steals the show. She sounds as slinky and low-down as ever on the creeping, nocturnal “Bad Seed,” and the full-bodied, gospel humming of “I Lost My Baby” is affecting, perfectly attuned to the song’s dark, smoky environs and felt deep inside a one’s bones.

Dynamic and utterly captivating, with a charismatic delivery that can be polished and seductive, or forceful and gripping, Watson’s voice is a marvel, suggesting shared DNA with the likes of Bessie Smith, Memphis Minnie and Mamie Smith. Watson has gone far with her BFA in jazz studies and theatre from Concordia University in Montreal. She belongs in that same company of those female blues greats. ---Peter Lindblad, elmoremagazine.com

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