Misty Blues - Pickled & Aged (2019)

01 – Spilt Whiskey 02 – Our Traveling Blues 03 – Let Them Blues 04 – You Thought I Would Fall 05 – Sweet Sweet Bourbon 06 – It's a Jungle out There 07 – Take a Long Ride 08 – Chicago to Memphis 09 – Mountain Dew 10 – Need More 11 – Stoop Stomp Gina Coleman (Lead Vocals/Cigar Box/Percussion) Jason Webster (Guitar/Banjo/Vocals) Bill Patriquin (Bass/Trumpet/Vocals) Benny Kohn (Keys/Vocals) Rob Tatten (Drums/Tuba/Vocals) Aaron Dean (Sax) + Diego Mongue (Drums/Bass)

From their beginnings in Berkshire County, MA, Misty Blues have captured the spirit of the great female blues artists of yesteryear. Founder and lead singer Gina Coleman was born for this, with her husky voice and ability to make any song her own. But make no mistake, this is no cover band. They masterfully mix blues with Jazz, Funk, Soul, and Tent Revival Gospel to create a sound that is both fresh and as familiar as grandma's Sunday supper.

Pickled & Aged is the band's 8th album, released shortly after their performance as finalists in the 2019 International Blues Challenge. The opening track, "Spilt Whiskey," sounds as if it came from the 20s/30s soundtrack of Harlem's famous Cotton Club. Coleman wrote this ditty (as well as 7 more of the 11 tracks), but she somehow tapped into the very marrow of Bessie Smith. The song is bawdy and brilliant, and the only criticism we have is not in the performance, but in the mix. At times the music overpowers Coleman's robust vocals, and we don't want to miss a word. Otherwise, it's the perfect song to open the album from a band who's been praising the great women blues singers for the last two decades.

Misty Blues is made up of Coleman on lead vocals (with occasional turns on percussion and cigar box guitar), Jason Webster (guitar, banjo, vocals – including lead vocals on "Need More," which he also wrote), Bill Patriquin (bass, trumpet, vocals), Benny Kohn (keys, vocals), Rob Tatten (drums, tuba, vocals), Aaron Dean (sax). Special guest Diego Monque plays drums on

“Spilt Whiskey,” and bass on “Let Them Blues.”

From the 20s vibe of “Spilt Whiskey,” the band jumps straight into the rockin’ “Our Traveling Blues.” It reminds us of some killer classic rock and roll embroiled with a New Orleans second line. An interesting combination that was new to our ears, but really works. “Let Them Blues” takes us back on the musical timeline with its jazzy, late night club vibe.

Next up is “You Thought I Would Fall.” It’s a jazz-tinged bluesy number that feels right at home during any time frame. “Sweet Sweet Bourbon” is a very danceable double shuffle that pays homage to Kentucky’s finest export. Kohn and Dean really let loose on their solos, and Webster follows with a killer guitar solo.

Again Misty Blues take a hard left turn, with the Kohn-penned instrumental “It’s a Jungle Out There.” This is Jazz in its finest form, and makes for a terrific palate cleanser midway through the release. “Take a Long Ride” has a deep funk aura that builds into a wailing sax attention grabber, then a 60s electro rock guitar. This song also has Coleman pulling double duty on vocals and cigar box guitar.

“Chicago to Memphis” returns us to a more familiar Windy City blues tune, but is blended with a bit of Texas shuffle too. Bill and Kathy Patriquin are credited with writing this fun song. “Mountain Dew” is another song about alcohol (it’s starting to dawn on us where the “pickled” in the title came from). It’s another great tune with Coleman’s vocals kicking out some great lyrics backed by a group that’s tighter than Dick’s hatband.

Guitarist Jason Webster wrote “Need More,” and also performs the lead vocals as well as guitar. “Need More” is another jazzy song with a bit of a haunting backline. One can imagine a late night club off a dark alley with Webster and Dean cutting heads (guitar vs sax). Brilliant.

If you’re a fan of “Let the Juke Joint Jump,” by the phenomenal Koko Taylor (and let’s face it, who isn’t) then you’re gonna love “Stoop Stomp.” Our choice for favorite cut from Pickled & Aged, it’s an upbeat and bright song that audibly takes us from Saturday night soul food supper and porch party right into Sunday morning services. The foot-stomping, Gospel beat is absolutely contagious, and the lyrics have all the necessities to take the old folks back home, and teach the younger ones a thing or two. It’s also Patriquin’s turn to shine on a great bass

solo.

The musical combinations that Misty Blues create are something that we don't hear every day. In fact, rarely if ever. Many artists can combine rock and blues, or jazz and blues, or gospel and blues, but damn few do it with the brilliant, joyful noise produced by Misty Blues on Pickled & Aged. Don't wait a minute longer. Get yourself a copy today, and if for some inexplicable reason you don't love it – just send it to us, because we're sure we're gonna wear our copy out. ---JD Nash, americanbluesscene.com

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