Rod Piazza - California Blues (1997)

1. Chicken Shack Boogie (Cullum, Milburn) [2:39] 2. Bad, Bad Boy (Piazza) [3:30] 3. No More Pretty Presents (Piazza) [4:13] 4. California Blues (copyright control) [4:48] 5. One Mint Julep (Toombs) [3:36] 6. Worried Life Blues (Hopkins, Merriweather) [4:07] 7. Deep Fried (Piazza) [3:08] 8. Can't Get That Stuff No More (Traditional) [4:14] 9. 4811 Wadsworth (Blues for George) (Piazza, Traditional) [5:35] 10. It's Too Late Brother (Duncan, Duncan) [4:04] 11. Low Down Dog (Turner) [4:59] Personnel: Rod Piazza (vocals, harmonica)

I have seen Rod Piazza and the Mighty Flyers perform many times over the years and have listened to most of their CD's. While the band is good and always puts on a good show, I tend to lean toward the two Rod Piazza CD's that he put out as solo efforts, "California Blues" and "Harpburn". The reason is quite simple, when the band all plays together and/or record they seem to always include two or three boogie woogie numbers to accommodate the fine organ playing of wife Honey. Not a bad gesture but, if you dislike boogie woogie as I do, those songs tend to be throw away tunes and distract from the real reason that one purchases a Piazza CD in the first place, to hear the harp.

Of course, if you like boogie woogie, you will want to go out and buy any of the CD's that features the Mighty Flyers and, of course, Honey Piazza. Honey, by the way does play a mean organ, I suppose that is how she got into the band in the first place having never played in a professional band prior to meeting Rod in a bar where he was performing, but that's another story.

On this disc, Rod blows harder than anyone I have ever seen before (sorry Honey!). He can go from holding a single sustained note to a warbled vibrato with ease. At times Piazza makes his harp sing like an alto sax and at other times like a baritone. If there is a soft spot on the disc, it has to be Piazza' vocals. However, on the bright side, later discs show that his vocals have

improved substantially. Low or high notes, fast or slow, Piazza is one of the best. If the blues harp is your thing, check this guy out you will not be disappointed. ---deepbluereview, amazon.com

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