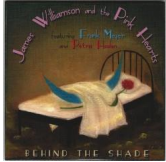


James Williamson And The Pink Hearts - Behind The Shade (2018)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 25 July 2019 12:51 -

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1 *Riot On The Strip* 2:59 2 *Judith Christ* 5:05 3 *Pink Hearts Across The Sky* 3:19 4 *You Send Me Down* 4:47 5 *Destiny Now* 3:58 6 *This Garden Lies* 3:58 7 *Purple Moon* 4:19 8 *Miss Misery* 5:30 9 *The Revolution Stomp* 3:25 10 *Behind The Shade* 5:18 11 *Died A Little Today* 3:37
Jason Carmer Bass, Mixing, Piano Alejandro Escovedo Composer Gregg Foreman Keyboards Petra Haden Violin, Vocals, Vocals (Background) Nick Hart Piano Steffen Kuehn Trumpet Frank Meyer Guitar, Vocals, Vocals (Background) Tony Peebles Saxophone, Soloist Paul Roessler Piano Don Rooke Lap Steel Guitar Herve Salters Keyboards Michael Urbano Drums, Percussion Audrey Vera Piano James Williamson Bass, Composer, Guitar, Primary Artist, Producer Geoff Yeaton Saxophone

The burning question for us rabid and greedy fans is why does ex-Stooges guitarist Williamson only play his fabulous leads on 2/3 of the songs on *Behind the Shade*?! That said, craftsman Williamson delivers some stone solid classic rock & rhythm here, with OG L.A. veteran musicians Frank Mayer and Petra Haden providing heartfelt vocals, both together and separately. Songs are embellished variously at times with keyboards, violin or horns, and every song works as an anthem of sorts. And, as the credits mention, “James Williamson—Guitars on everything”! ---David Arnson, musicconnection.com

With an illustrious career as a songwriter and guitarist for nearly fifty years, most known for playing on The Stooges' landmark 1973 release *Raw Power*, James Williamson has turned his attention to his latest collaboration and first record since 2014's *Re-Licked*. On *Behind The Shade*, Williamson and The Pink Hearts, consisting of The Streetwalkin' Cheetahs' vocalist Frank Myer, and singer, violinist, and composer Petra Haden, soar over a collection of 11 tracks that bring rock & roll back to its roots with an array of influences stemming from punk, classic

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rock, the blues, and folk.

“Riot On The Strip” opens the album with a blast from a crunchy and fuzzy guitar and Myer’s aggressive vocals. Haden’s voice, while just as strong, adds a sense of warmth to the fast paced flow of the verse. The vocals, despite being very much influenced for ‘70s punk – most notably that of Iggy Pop and an American John Lydon – stand out for not only their raw energy, but also the lush harmonies between the two singers. “Riot On Sunset Strip” is among the most hard hitting tracks on the record and captures some of Williamson’s best guitar playing on the album; with a tone that sounds as if it was pulled straight from ‘73. His playing remains as fiery as it was on The Stooges’ classic “Search And Destroy”, but more refined. While not quite toned down, his playing is tighter, and his soloing and lead lines reflect a more sophisticated taste that feels slightly reminiscent of Keith Richards. The album continues with a slower rocker, “Judith Christ”, a track that sounds like Van Morrison cranked up to eleven that features an infectious piano line, while “This Garden Lies” feels like Ziggy era Bowie taking a trip down the French Quarter of New Orleans with its accenting horns and explosive trumpet solo.

Behind The Shade proves to be a versatile album with its inclusion of multiple slower tracks and ballads that demand as much attention as the rockers mentioned previously. While the Haden led “Pink Hearts Across The Sky” and acoustic “Miss Misery” capture a softer and slightly folky energy, the album’s title track stands out as a beautifully written composition. “Behind The Shade” is a track that follows a winding journey that will leave the listener surprised by not only the creative direction of the song, but the raw sense of emotion in the performance with Haden adding stirring violins, while Myer shreds his vocal chords belting out the songs dark lyrics. In short, “Behind The Shade”, all on its own, is a masterpiece.

It’s clear that among the harder hitting songs, also including “You Send Me Down” and “The Revolutionary Stomp”, punk rock plays only a small part in this stage of Williamson’s career as he experiments with a number of different elements and influences. The ballads also demonstrate how far away from his roots he strays as he plays with tones, structures, and textures closer to folk and contemporary rock for the sake of delivering a highly emotional track. While being a thoroughly enjoyable and dynamic record, Behind The Shade is a new career milestone for Williamson that only furthers the narrative of how he continues to push the boundaries of music, and his own legacy, through his guitar playing and song writing. ---Gerrod Harris, spillmagazine.com

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