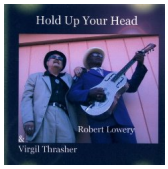
Robert Lowery & Virgil Thrasher - Hold up Your Head (2016)



1.Hold up Your Head 3:49 2.Lowery's #2 Boogie 4:04 3.Trouble No More 3:32 4.Amtrak Blues 3:39 5.Automobile Blues 4:52 6.Prison Time Blues 3:18 7.Bull Cow Blues 4:08 8.Big Bad Bull Dog 3:24 9.Can't Loose What You Never Had 3:42 10.Good Lookin' Woman 4:27 11.Sweet Lucy May 4:04 12.Money Spending Woman 4:34 13.Keep on Walkin' (Walk My Troubles Away)[Robert Lowery] 3:46 Robert Lowery – guitar, vocals Virgil Thrasher – harmonica

Robert Lowerty conveyed a traditional, down-low sound with roots in an America today but a dim memory. The Delta Blues language to which he gave plain and expressive voice, though, writhed and shouted with living blood. His triumph on this recording owed much to intuitive, adroit accenting by harp player Virgil Thrasher.

These 14 songs were recorded in 2003. And they were largely coined in the moment, according to MacDonald, who engineered them. In a series of tweets to me, he recalled the session.

"Robert and Virgil did almost all the songs in one take together. Mic'd plywood piece on floor under Bob's foot for beat...I could tell Bob was making a lot up and Virgil was hearing it for the first time and just playing along like he knew the song."

A 2008 Freepott Records online page noted that Robert was born in Arkansas, in 1931. And that he received his first guitar from his father, also a blues guitarist. That gift was to prove profoundly consequential. By the 60s, Robert was backing legendary shouter Big Mama Thornton. Doubtless, she recognized in his playing the natural life-spark and bold assertiveness that was to carry him far. After backing Thornton, Robert took his acoustic Delta Blues to

far-flung audiences. He appeared at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, the San Francisco Blues Festival (three years), Philadelphia Blues Festival, Arkansas' Eureka Springs Festival, Italy's San Remo Blues Festival, and the Northsea Jazz Festival, in the Netherlands.

"The thing about Lowery is his amazing agility and finesse as a guitarist," CountryBlues.com would later declare. "He can slide and fingerpick, and for anyone who wants to hear the truehearted, gritty, authentic old blues, Lowery is an incomparable treat. He sings in a rich tenor, and accompanies himself in the typical Delta guitar style, rhythmic, deep-roots sound, gritty and rough-hewn, but sweet."

Again, from Freepott: "Bob plays a custom-made steel guitar with a single cone National Resonator. It has a sound as unique and appropriate for the blues as his inimitable playing style. A lifetime of playing has taken him all over the world, and acquainted him with the better-known blues statesmen of the world -- which he rightly deserves a place amongst."

Over the years, Robert shared stages with Taj Mahal, Albert Collins, Buddy Guy, Jimmy Rodgers, Honeymouth Edwards, and Gatemouth Brown. His later appreciators were struck by Robert's stylistic heritage. Living Blues magazine writer Tom Mazzolini observed that Lowery's "vocal and guitar intonations are remarkably close to Robert Johnson's. And if one should happen to close one's eyes, the feeling could be that Robert Johnson is performing."

Pulse reviewer Michael Point wrote that, "If anyone doubts the existence of credible modern purveyors of Johnson-influenced music, they haven't heard longtime West Coast bluesman Robert Lowery."

Lowery's unpretentious, gutbucket-on-the-front-porch sound was "in the tradition of Lightnin' Hopkins and Robert Johnson," said All Music's Thom Owens. "He weaves stories and plays deceptively complex rhythms.

In his last tweet to me, MacDonald shared sad news: Lowery suffered a stroke years after recording these tracks. And, MacDonald concluded, Robert may have ceased performing and recording.

And this is the depressing yet uplifting manner in which significant art endures. As golden-era icons pass from currency, their contributions find eager reflection by incoming generations, crafting their own works, in their unique tongues, with predecessors' creations as era-grounded foundations.

"Hold Up Your Head," through its just-right realization of human magic in spontaneous gestation, documents that Robert Lowery made authentic music. Which is the highest praise any musician can receive. --- damnationdanceparty.blogspot.com

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