

Sonny Moorman – Low Down (2015)

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1. *Wrong Side of Town* 2. *Afterglow* 3. *Nothing You Can Tell a Fool* 4. *Mean Streak* 5. *Lowdown* 6. *Down in the Flood (Crash on the Levee)* 7. *Open All Night* 8. *Spark in the Dark* 9. *Hard Time Killing Floor Blues* 10. *Mayfly* 11. *Jelly Roll* 12. *Jacky Ray* Tom Gray (lead vocals, guitars, keyboards, harmonica) Mark Johnson (guitar) Franher Joseph (bass) Marlon Patton (drums) Anna Kramer and Francine Reed (backing vocals)

Some records just don't want to come off your music system, such is their demand to be played, and Delta Moon's latest release, *Low Down*, is one of them. The band packs 12 songs into just three-quarters of an hour, but the result is an early contender for some "Best Of" awards at the end of the year.

Although *Low Down* is the band's 10th album, they have yet to achieve the widespread acclaim their talents deserve. This release may change that. Featuring nine originals by lead vocalist Tom Gray together with three covers by Bob Dylan, Tom Waits and Skip James, the album is a scorching brew of traditional blues-rock, but with the emphasis on the blues rather than the rock, helped in no small part by the wonderful double slide guitar attack of Tom Gray and Mark Johnson.

Opening with "Wrong Side Of Town", which has hints of Sonny Landreth in its Louisiana-stylings, Tom Gray sings in his warm, whispery, whiskey-aged voice: "Across the tracks, you like to put it down. Welcome back to the wrong side of town." In fact, the entire album sounds like the best that can possibly come from the wrong side of town. Gray's lyrics paint vivid images of life in the shadows and on the edge. In "Mean Streak", he sings "Close shave, could have been dead, had denial in my head and a fist down in my gut. You didn't kill me, but you sure tried, and you still ain't giving up" before the defiant chorus of "You got a mean streak, running through and through. But I got a mean streak, I'm just as mean as you."

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“Afterglow” again has rhythmic hints of the Big Easy, before the jungle drums and reverb-laden bottleneck guitars (subtly hinting at the slide melody of Muddy’s “Can’t Be Satisfied”) of “Nothing You Can Tell A Fool” lead to a descending chord chorus in which Gray warns: “No matter how you tell it, no matter what you do, there is nothing, nothing you can tell a fool.”

Gray’s intelligent, well-constructed songs sit easily alongside covers of Tom Wait’s “Low Down”, Dylan’s “Down In The Flood” and Skip James’ “Hard Time Killing Floor Blues”. The latter track, a notoriously difficult song to cover, is here given a modern-day re-interpretation in which the ethereal, other-worldly tone of the original is replaced with a melancholy resignation and haunting multi-voiced chants. It is perhaps the most striking song amongst many on the album.

Other highlights include the gorgeous backing vocals and soaring slide guitar on “Mayfly”, taking the listener on a summer escape “like a moment out of history” and the dual-slide guitars in “Spark In The Dark” and “Open All Night”. --- Rhys Williams, bluesblastmagazine.com

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