Barbecue Bob & The Spareribs - Pass The Biscuits (1999)



01. Get It While the Gettin' Is Good 3.18 play *02. Turn Your Lamp Down Low 4.57 03. A Bullet For You 6.03 04. Too Bored to Live, Too Dumb to Die 3.18 05. My Home Is a Prison 4.39 06. High Cotton 3.26 07. Hot Biscuit 2.53 08. Gorillacillin 3.26 09. Meet Me After Midnight 4.42* play *10. One Step Closer 2.51 11. Ass, Gas, or Grass 3.06 12. My Baby's Sweeter 7.02 13. The Backslider 4.16*
Barbecue Bob And The Spareribs: Robert Pomeroy (vocals, guitar, harmonica); Ira Spinrad (guitar, slide guitar, background vocals); Dominick Zarrillo (bass); Dave Ross (drums, background vocals). Additional personnel: Neil "Tex" Thomas (accordion, piano, washboard); Bruce Martin (Hammond B-3 organ); Charles Otis (percussion).

Let's face it: Most blues music reeks of honky revival. You know the stuff. Amiable white guys who memorize the collected licks of Robert Johnson or more likely Stevie Ray Vaughn or even more likely George Thorogood, wreak havoc on the same three chords over and over. Pretty soon the refried hockey blues of Canned Heat is sounding pretty good.

Not so with this outfit. A roster of NYC-NJ blues veterans who have the chops to back up their considerable record collections, BBQ Bob & the Spareribs play it as hard and mean as those excellent Excello sides recently anthologized (and worth your time) by Hip-O / Universal. In fact, on their second CD, Pass the Biscuits, they cover Lonesome Sundown's (Cornelius Green) "My Home is a Prison" (written by J.D. Miller, who also wrote Kitty Wells' "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels"), which appeared on The Excello Story Volume Two. Here, singer Bob Pomeroy's harp traces guitarist Ira Spinrad's lead lines in glorious stereo. Those two do a lot of chasing each other. In place of a twin guitar attack, Spinrad and Pomeroy trade licks between distorted harp and guitar. True telepathy at times.

There's plenty to chew on here. "A Bullet for You" is a muted rumble that recalls the high-wire

tension of the Rolling Stones' "Midnight Rambler". "One Step Closer" has the R&B sweetness of Arthur Alexander. Legendary Chicago harpist Little Walter gets a nod of the hat with a cover of "My Baby's Sweeter." "High Cotton" is that merge of raw bottomed blues and country music that some people think the Band accomplished with their first few records. That only shows how laid back hippies can be.

This ain't a nostalgia show. There are eleven originals here that in a blindfold test you wouldn't be able to correctly date. Coulda been written fifty years ago, coulda been yesterday. The rhythm section is a mother and you can hear it steamroll through "Too Bored to Live, Too Dumb to Die," "Hot Biscuit" or "Gorillacillin" if you feel the need to impulsively shake your ass.

The entire CD was recorded live on Tuesday, June 13, 1999 at Coyote Studios in Brooklyn and the result is the actual energy of live show. Unlike, say, the Rolling Stones, who stripped it down for their acoustic outing, only to employ back-up singers, keyboardists and other sweeteners, these guys are the raw deal. When they grab Bruce Martin for a little Hammond B-3, Charles Otis for percussion or Neil Tex Thomas for piano, accordion or washboard, it's to fill out the sound, not to pad it. There's a difference. Only goes to show you how screwed up the music business is these days that guys playing their instruments live in a room could be considered such a novel idea. ---Rob O’Connor

It's rare that you are able to truly imagine what a blues group would sound like live based on a studio-recorded CD. That's not the case with "Pass the Biscuits" from Barbecue Bob and the Spareribs. One listen to this and you'll want to hear these guys in a dark blues club late at night.

This CD has a raw, authentic edge to it because these New York City/New Jersey blues veterans recorded the all 13 tracks in one day. The mix is great, simply because this recording was not overproduced - it's straight blues all around. The challenge is to peg the style of this group. You can hear the Delta blues influences on the edgy "A Bullet for You," the 50's rock influence on "Gorillacillin" and just about every other avenue of blues scattered throughout this recording.

The music is great because of the individual strengths of the musicians. Bob Pomeroy's vocals have a laid back, ultra cool feel. His harp work is smooth and soulful. The guitar work, especially the slide guitar on "Hot Biscuit" (a Pomeroy original) cuts through effortlessly, making this one of the best tracks on the disk. The rhythm section is tight and has a way of sitting just behind the beat, making you hang on for each downbeat. ---Joe Thornton

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