

BLUES^{IN} BRITAIN

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Imelda May & Mike Sanchez

Catfish Keith

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Sharp Dressed Man

BLUES FOR SALE



Blues Caravan 2020

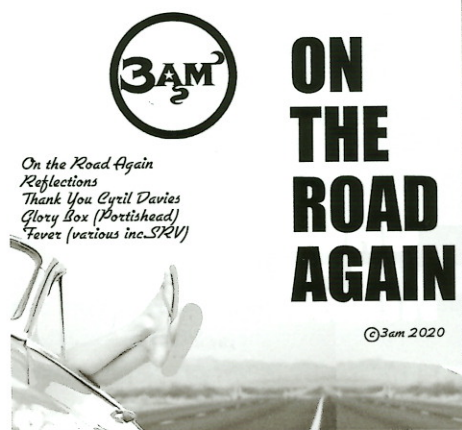
The Ruf Records Blues Caravan 2020 rolled out in Europe last year, playing to audiences in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia and over to the UK. Well, that was the plan, and indeed gigs were performed in Germany in the early months. But of course all was scuppered as the evil of Covid unfolded across the world. Fortunately Ruf recorded a live gig in Nuernberg for the accompanying album. Featured were Texan gunslinger Jeremiah Johnson, fiery Californian vocalist Whitney Shay and from Tupelo, axe man Ryan Perry. All have released albums in 2020 and were performing with the redoubtable support of Roger Innis on bass and Amanda Dal on drums, making a formidable "tour de force". The resultant CD has 14 tracks in what has become a standard Ruf format, each artist fronting up three of their songs and the remainder a combined effort, often covers, always dynamic.

The opening joint effort, aptly Canned Heat's 'Let's Work Together' has Ryan Perry taking lead. His dark granular vocals ride across the tight weave, stitched together with his 6 string side-arm, I'm reminded of Larry McCray in style. Then 'High Risk Low Reward' brings gritty guitar spun out under the gruff lyrics, surging forward from the pumping rhythm, an outstanding track lifted from Perry's 2020 debut album. Whitney takes lead, her vocals full and spirited, and delivers songs from her 2020 release, *Stand Up*, none more demonstrative of that spirit than its title track, delivered with the force of Tina Turner, but with a jazzier edge, Ryan lending his guitar in support. Her fiery voice reflecting her red flaming hair, the wildcat of the trio, Shay holds nothing back for her soulful demonstrative message 'A Woman Rules The World'. Jeremiah has an arguably more soulful, Southern voice, but his guitar play is as distinctive as Ryan's. His Southern drawl delivers the striking 'White Lightning', full of storming Gibson guitar riffs backed by the

thunder of Roger's bass. The standout JJ track however is the slow burning, paint blistering 'Showdown', the superlative guitar exchanging lead with the emotive lyrics. Amanda adds some lovely hand drum with Innis's bass deeply satisfying as ever. Whitney and Ryan join him, taking us all the way to some good 'Old Time Rock 'N' Roll' with Whitney calling the shots, pulling the crowd along. We're treated to percussionist Amanda Dal, let loose for a fusillading drum solo.

To add to the release of this live and kicking recording, those nice people at Ruf also managed to film the whole set, and a dvd featuring the full 24 song show is available as part of the package. If that's not worth savouring in a world deprived of live music, what is? Not a substitute for the real thing, and I was one of the many who would have seen the 2020 Caravan, but it is a brilliant 'all in' package, and I applaud Ruf Records for that.

Graham Munn

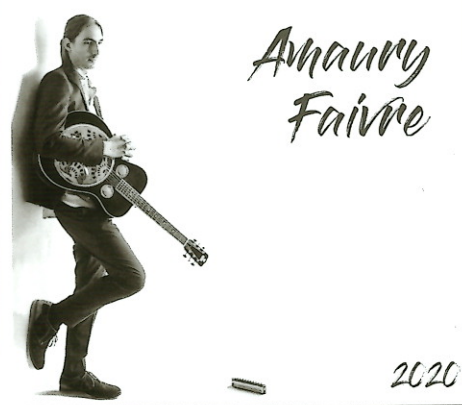


3 am Rocking Blues: On The Road Again

The individual and collective pedigree of this band and its members is a long and impressive one: working with artists as diverse as Mike Batt, Maggie Bell and the Strawbs, 3am Rocking Blues have been together since 2004, chalking up a large number of gigs at venues and festivals across the UK. The current line-up has been together since 2019, comprising Laura Long (vocals), Phil Evans (bass), Tim Renton (guitar), Chris Parren (keyboards) and Phil Myers (drums). Coming in at just under 20 minutes this 5-track offering probably comes under the heading of 'mini-album', comprising 3 self-written and 2 cover versions. The opener 'On The Road Again' (no, not that one) is a fairly gentle country-rock song, the type of which would have fitted nicely into the set-list of Eggs Over Easy or Brinsley Schwartz back in the days of pub-rock. Next up is 'Reflections' which has a feel of Nina Simone about it; Phil Evans' bass is

nicely prominent in the mix. 'Thank You Cyril Davis' is a self-explanatory acknowledgement of the subject's importance to both Tim Renton and the British Blues scene, laden with period-piece references to The Marquee Club, Long John Baldry, Alexis Korner and 'Got My Mojo Working', et al: honourable mention to drummer Phil Myers' harmonica on this. 'Glory Box' is a fairly faithful cover of the Portishead song, emotionally sung by Laura Long, sounding not unlike Grace Slick. The closing number 'Fever' (made famous by Peggy Lee amongst others) is given the treatment a la SRV's Cold Shot; there's some nice interplay between Tim's guitar and Chris's keyboards and whilst the vocals are given quite a sultry delivery, the track smoulders but never quite catches fire. In many ways, the last track summarises the mini-album: as you might expect from musicians of such high calibre the standard of performance is technically faultless, yet there's an absence of energy or 'pizzazz' if you wish. I've little doubt that as a live act they would deliver these songs with plenty of sparkle but taken on its own it falls a little flat.

Russ Cottee



Amaury Faivre: 2020

Born in France and a graduate of Musicology in Besançon, then studying jazz guitar at the University of Montreal, Amaury Faivre eventually settled in Geneva, representing Switzerland in the International and European Blues Challenge events. At the time of writing, this album has already picked up quite a lot of traction in terms of radio airplay, becoming an IBBA 'pick' for March 2021 and featuring in that organisation's playlist charts.

The opener 'Amuse Bouche' is a foot-stomping harmonica instrumental, in the style of Sonny Terry without the whoops and hollers. 'Wrong Girl' is a nice fusion of banjo, mandolin and harmonica (all played by Faivre) underpinned by the ubiquitous stomp-box; a nice set of lyrics delivered with measured amounts of light and shade in his phrasing. 'Sister' slows down the pace with

acoustic guitar and harp and again showcases a plaintive vocal and builds nicely. 'Kinda Girl' is a finger-picked folky style number that again starts off very simply and gradually introduces more instruments into the arrangement. 'Heart Of Stone' (no, not that one) has some clever interplay between his acoustic guitar and Dobro, plus some very pleasing vocal harmonies. 'Invite a Danse' is a French language song that bops along in a catchy New Orleans style and highlights some more accomplished guitar and Dobro slide playing. 'Mary Mae' reminds me of song that Lynwood Slim might have delivered; again, the stripped back instrumentation is well measured. 'Even More' starts with some impressive tuned-down guitar and interplay with the harmonica and tells the emotive tale of the financial struggles of a gigging musician. 'Pouring Rain' is an upbeat, bouncy story of playing outside with his child (who makes a brief vocal entrance) in a downpour. 'Best Thing For You' is the nearest thing to a straight slow blues in the set; lovely arrangement and vocals. The closing 'Watch Her Sleep' is a stylish instrumental that sounds like it should belong to a sentimental Neil Young song – nicely evocative.

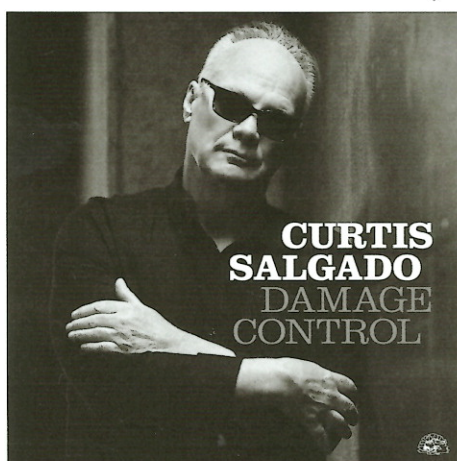
The title '2020' is in itself the explanation for the album: like so many musicians, he was denied the usual avenue of collaboration with fellow musicians so compiled the tracks in his home studio, using a nice selection of 'unplugged' instruments. There is little trace of Faivre's native accent in his vocals and the thoughtful lyrics are all the more impressive when you consider that they are not written (apart from one track) in his native language. A lovely album, best enjoyed with the lights dimmed, shoes kicked off and a glass of something nice to hand.

Russ Cottee

Curtis Salgado: Damage Control

Alligator

After a stripped back duo album last time round Curtis returns to a full band sound on a collection that covers all the bases – blues, soul, gospel and r'n'b. Curtis has one of the best voices in contemporary blues and soul and really testifies on 'The Longer That I Live', gospel-infused piano and organ to the fore on a song to which every aging music fan will definitely relate: *"When I go I'll be screaming, hey, I ain't finished yet!"* The soulful 'What Did Me In Did Me Well' is one of just two tracks on which Curtis plays harmonica, here in high-register, Stevie Wonder style. We get rocking piano (from Kevin McKendree and Jim Pugh respectively) on 'You're Gonna Miss My Sorry Ass' and 'Count Of Three' while the incredibly catchy 'Precious Time' has intense slide guitar



built round a wonderful hook. In the gospel-infused ballad 'Always Say I Love You' Curtis mourns the passing of a friend and sings emotionally about how you must always speak up so you don't regret missing the moment. Curtis casts a critical eye at corporate greed and political failures, sounding quite angry as he semi-speaks the lyrics of 'The Fix Is In' and blows his harp intensely in his solo. 'I Don't Do That No More' is an apt statement for a recovering addict and this roadhouse rocker barrels along with more strong piano while the title track is a mid-paced r'n'b number that proposes that we should deal with problems as they arise rather than bottling them up for later. Curtis turns his hand to zydeco on 'Truth Be Told' joined by Wayne Toups on squeezebox and vocals, then combines lyrics about ancient history with New Orleans rhythms on 'Hail Mighty Caesar', one of two tracks on which horns are added to good effect, the other being a barnstorming take on Larry Williams' 'Slow Down', the sole cover on the set and an excellent choice to close the album.

Recorded in three different studios, this is a high quality album and comes highly recommended.

John Mitchell

Brigitte DeMeyer: Seeker

Brigitte DeMeyer is a Californian by birth, but happily based in Nashville, where she creates her delicious and distinctive form of country blues. She has lovely lightly smoked, warm and rounded Southern qualities in her voice, and is a delight to listen to. Having been fortunate back in the days when she toured the UK with Will Kimbrough to have seen her live I could not resist delving into her new album. *Seeker* proves to be both soulful and poetic, it is achingly beautiful music, cowritten with producer and keyboard player Jano Rix. The groove is described as Bob Dylan meets Sly Stone, that seems apt and an accurate label to hang on this album.

'All The Blue' opens the set, a slow,



throbbing, emotional song dripping with deep bass notes, Brigitte calling us to look to the sky and *"all the blue"*. 'Cat Man Do' and 'Ain't No Mister' bring a touch of funk and swaggering vibe – *"high hat and low brow, you ain't no good anyhow"*, *"you ain't no mister of mine"*, paints the picture nicely. Piano, slide guitar, and the stark, gorgeously soulful DeMeyer vocals deliver the luscious licks of 'Louisiana On My Mind', the undeniable call of the magnolia state, drawing her back to her spiritual home, a superlative, ridiculously seductive song, with its signal call for that broken and flawed state. Rix's piano adds some wonderful touches to the tracks on this album, the metronomic beat and effervescent groove of 'Calamity Gone' is no exception. Brigitte plays out a poetic 'Already In' as solo acoustic, home is where you find it, any song lyrics that can slot in a mention of *Cool Hand Luke* into the verse finds accord with me! 'Seeker' has double bass and the rich honeyed, deep bowed strings of a cello. It will find its way into your mind with its haunting rhythm and spiritual lyrics, a worthy song to carry the flag for this album.

There is nothing over played, over produced, ground out or gritty in these recordings, it's just wonderfully rootsy with finely crafted songs, perfect to chill out with in these arduous times. Brigitte's sweet, soft burr is comforting, the musicianship, which features various guest artists, is spare but beautifully formed.

Graham Munn

Misty Blues: None More Blue

This Massachusetts band offers a multi-talented line-up with bassist Bill Patriquin also playing trumpet, drummer Rob Tatten doubling on trombone and vocalist Gina Coleman playing occasional cigar box guitar; the rest of the core band is Aaron Dean (sax), Seth Fleischmann (guitar) and Benny Kohn (keys). Gina wrote ten of the tracks here, four on her own and six in collaboration with band