

Steel Guitar, and delivering a vocal performance that gives me chills, thirty three years after I first heard it. It's almost eerie, but sadly, an all too familiar tale of how Blues artists sometimes end their days. Some people may question why this album has been reissued. All I'll say is this: thank God the folks at BMG realize that this is not just merely an album of Blues songs, it's an important history lesson.

STEPHEN HARRISON

JOHNNIE JOHNSON I'M JUST JOHNNIE

Missouri Morning Records

Two decades after his death, Rock & Roll Hall of Famer Johnnie Johnson, often hailed as the unsung architect of rock 'n' roll piano is celebrated on this twelve-track posthumous release. Best known for his groundbreaking work alongside Chuck Berry, Johnson's legacy gets a long-overdue spotlight on this star-studded release produced by Gene Ackmann comprising of two CD's. This major release features tracks spotlighting Johnson's unmistakable keyboard touch. The opener, I'm Just Johnnie is a classic example of his amazing piano playing and the band is incredible. He is joined by a stellar cast including Bruce Hornsby, Bonnie Raitt, Johnny Rivers, and John Sebastian. Former Mama's Pride members Baker, Dickie Steltenpohl, Paul Willett, and Pat Liston lend soulful support. Collaboration is the theme and two songs featuring Charles Glenn I Get Weary and Heebie Jeebies are highlights. Also guesting is NFL All-Pro Henry Lawrence who adds unexpected vocal grit to songs, Lo Down and Stagger Lee. Drummer Kenny Rice and bassist Gus Thornton, both veterans of Johnson's and Albert King's bands, keep the groove tight throughout. The version of, Every Day I Have The Blues is packed with rhythm and piano artistry, he is backed vocally by Bonnie Raitt and duets on piano with Bruce Hornsby, just sublime musicianship. Disc two offers something equally intimate: one of Johnson's final interviews,

conducted by SiriusXM's Pat St. John, tracing his storied journey from the early days with Berry through his own later recognition. Bonnie Raitt also shares heartfelt reflections on her friend and collaborator. This release isn't just a tribute, it's a reminder that the roots of rock still rumble, thanks to the man who helped give it rhythm

COLIN CAMPBELL

KARIM ALBERT KOOK AND EDOUARD BINEAU ROOTS OF BLUES

Independent

With only two performers, and an album of ten blues classics, there is always the danger that releases like this will not contain any musical surprises, or much in the variety of sounds and arrangements. The slide and acoustic guitar and vocals of Karim Albert Kook and the harmonica playing of Edouard Bineau are all there is to the album, but in this case, it is more than enough. The rhythmic guitar perfectly suits the vocals, whilst there is talent, technique and imagination in the harmonica solo. Although songs such as Rolling and Tumbling, It Hurts me Too, and Dust My Broom are familiar staples in the blues songbook, the lack of drums and bass allows for the lyrics to be appreciated afresh. Hoochie Coochie Man is also missing its signature guitar vamp, and the lively interplay of That's Alright Mama has the spirit of Elvis, but not the forward propulsion of Elvis Presley, guitarist Scotty Moore or the double bass of Bill Black. Midnight Special is a bluegrass trot, and Key to the Highway is a slower, brooding take on the number. The closing Trouble in Mind is perhaps the best showcase for the low vocals of Karim Albert Kook. The two performers are playing and singing music that is not from their natural culture, which adds something to both the rhythms and the singing that has been recorded. Although these songs have been recorded and performed dozens of times before, and will be performed for decades

to come, the stripped back, blues and boogie woogie rhythms, and the lack of a rhythm sections means that listeners can enjoy these songs in a novel fashion.

BEN MACNAIR

KENT BURNSIDE HILL COUNTRY BLUES

Strolling Bones Records

Ten tracks, two covers, eight original songs; this immediately leaped to my eye, and then something else also caught my eye. Kent Burnside has his uncle, Garry Burnside, alongside him, and with a little bit of delving, I found to my surprise that Garry Burnside is the son of R.L. Burnside. So, that makes Garry Kent's uncle, and Kent is the grandson of the late great R.L. Burnside. Well, that's cleared that up, a family of Blues artists, but does the greatness carry forth? Daddy Told Me, the opening track, answers that question, yes, the family Blues lineage has certainly been passed on to Kent. It has been passed on through his vocals, songwriting, and, more importantly, through his guitar chops. This is not an easy burden to carry on one's shoulders. Kent Burnside takes it all in his stride. Crawling King Snake is one of the two covers on the album. Now this has been covered many times by many artists; the original dates back to the 1920s, and then recorded by Big Joe Williams in 1941, before John Lee Hooker made it his own in 1949. This version has a deeper, more melancholy feel about it, Kent Burnside injecting his own vibes into this Blues classic. I Miss You finishes the album in some fine style, with great lyrics and vocals, one could say a perfect ending. But the Blues is, and never has been, about perfection; it's about feeling. Kent Burnside has a family legacy connecting him to the Blues; it may be in the blood, but it is certainly within his soul.

STEPHEN HARRISON