

Nashville Blues Society – March 7, 2012

OMAR AND THE HOWLERS - ESSENTIAL COLLECTION - RUF RECORDS

CD ONE: MAGIC MAN–EAST SIDE BLUES–BORDER GIRL–HARD TIMES IN THE LAND OF PLENTY–BAD SEED–WALL OF PRIDE–MISSISSIPPI HOO DOO MAN–BIG CHIEF PONTIAC–TEARS LIKE RAIN–MONKEY LAND–SNAKE OIL DOCTOR–MUDDY SPRINGS ROAD–BOOGIE MAN–YOU MADE ME LAUGH–JIMMY REED HIGHWAY

CD TWO: I WANT YOU–SNAKE RHYTHM ROCK–BURN IT TO THE GROUND–GOT MY HEART SET ON YOU–WORK SONG–ALLIGATOR WINE–DO IT FOR DADDY–I’M WILD ABOUT YOU–THAT’S YOUR DADDY YADDY YO–STONE COLD BLUES–GIRL’S GOT RHYTHM–LIFE WITHOUT YOU–WORLD OF TROUBLE–SUGAR DITCH–BUILT FOR COMFORT

McComb, MS native Omar Kent Dykes first got our attention over twenty-five years ago when he burst onto the scene with “Hard Times In The Land Of Plenty.” A tune that is as viable today as it was back then, it could easily serve as an Occupy Movement anthem with its poignant lyrics of “some’s got it all, and the rest ain’t got any.” And, Omar and his Howlers have continued to record hard-hitting blues-rock that has captivated his worldwide legion of fans. On this “Essential Collection,” Omar draws from thirteen albums and consists of thirty cuts over two discs. Disc One showcases the songs that defined Omar’s career, and Disc Two has fifteen of Omar’s hand-picked favorites.

For those unfamiliar with Omar, he truly is “300 pounds of muscle and joy,” with a vocal delivery that is equal parts Howlin’ Wolf and Lightnin’ Slim. He has a slashing guitar style borne of his Mississippi youth, listening to the likes of Muddy and Jimmy Reed. The set kicks off with a tribute to Elias McDaniel, better known as Bo Diddley, who also was a Mississippi native, “Magic Man,” with that signature beat. He blows some cool harp on an acoustic “Big Chief Pontiac,” and pays tribute to his homeland with “Muddy Springs Road.”

For us, the highlight of this disc was his homage to Elvis and John Lee Hooker, They had that certain “something inside them that had to come out,” and when it did, well, “you can’t stop the Boogie Man.”

Dis Two is full of the spirit of the Mississippi blues that Omar grew up on. Check out the stop-time slash of “Burn It To The Ground,” and the seerious mojo of “Alligator Wine.” “Work Song” is a collaboration with David “Fathead” Newman, while “Do It For Daddy” features that Diddley beat, augmented by the venerable Reese Wynans on keys. “That’s Your Daddy Yaddy Yo” has a swingin’ horn section and harp from Gary Primich. And, the set closes with another acoustic number, “Built For Comfort,” which was recorded in Denmark along with Rock Nalle and Magic Slim.

Omar Kent Dykes has thrilled audiences with his gritty, authentic approach to the blues, and has stood the test of time. His “Essential Collection” pulls it all together, and is highly enjoyable and highly recommended!! Until next time....Sheryl and Don Crow.