



Omar and the Howlers
I'm Gone
Big Guitar Music

Having recently had the pleasure to consider the excellent overview of the past two decades of Omar and the Howlers "Essential Collection" on Ruf, I recently received the latest Omar and the Howlers recording "I'm Gone" (Big Guitar Music). It's a session that has him joined by guitarists Casper Rawls and Derek O'Brien; bassists Ronnie James and Bruce Jones; and drummers Mike Buck and Wes Starr for a rocking collection of rockabilly and blues. It starts with the title track, a hot rockabilly stomp that evokes the classic Sun sound and with a forceful, gravelly vocal. "All About the Money" is a lazy blues shuffle with a relaxed vocal; some nicely articulated guitar and a nice relaxed pace. "Drunkard's Paradise" is a country number about drinking in the darkness with some chicken scratching guitar and steel guitar. Bo Diddley was an inspiration for Omar and on "Wild and Free" he uses the "Bo Diddley beat" and employs judicious use of tremolo on it, followed by the driving "Dust my Broom" groove of "Down At The Station." "Lone Star Blues" is an atmospheric, straight-ahead blues instrumental which, like this recording, benefits from the economical backing and playing that benefits as much by what is not played as what is played. The ensuing track, "Omar's Boogie" is a solid country-rockabilly instrumental with plenty of twang and is followed by the slow "Goin' Back to Texas," which has a swamp blues flavor; a nice, gritty vocal and Casper Rawls' guitar solo which takes some unexpected twists. "Let Me Hold You" is a swamp-pop styled ballad followed by an easy rocker, "Move Up To Memphis," and then a solid cover of John Lee Hooker's brooding "I'm Mad Again." The booklet misidentifies the track penned by Hooker and it is "I'm Mad Again," the 11th track, not the 10th track as stated there. The closing track is another rockabilly groover, "Take Me Back" which uses Scotty Moore's guitar riff from Elvis Presley's rendition of "Mystery Train." It's a lively track, solidly sung by Omar with his gravelly approach. It caps another solid and recommended recording from Omar Dykes.

Ron Weinstock