

Blues Blast Magazine – Sept. 27, 2012



Omar and The Howlers - *I'm Gone*

Big Guitar

12 Tracks: 44mins

<http://www.omarandthehowlers.com>

<http://www.myspace.com/omarandthehowlers>

<http://www.youtube.com/omarandthehowlers>

Kent Dykes was born and raised in McComb Mississippi, and that's a great start as it's also the home town of Bo Diddley and King Solomon Hill. Dykes joined his first band at 12. He is now 62 and is thus citing the fact that he has spent fifty years making the blues rock: And here's the really good news. It's true and he still does!

Apart from the Essential Collection album released earlier this year (which is what it says it is on the box) the last proper Howlers CD was 2009's Big Town Playboy and before that Bamboozled in 2005. Omar is rarely inactive though and a short examination of his discography will reveal collaborations with Jimmie Vaughn, Magic Slim and many others during the intervening years. This one however is straight Howlers.

This is the first release on Omar's own Big Guitar Music label and all the songs were written by Dykes except I'm Mad Again which is a John Lee Hooker cover. The Howlers include Wes Starr and Bruce Jones, who have been playing with Omar since 1980 and Mike Buck, Ronnie James, and added guitar action from Casper Rawls and Derek O'Brien. Omar says that he wanted the CD to reflect his likes and it does just that. Here we get blues, rockabilly, country and rock n roll and a mix of stuff that makes the album irresistible.

The opener I'm Gone is like a return to the 1950's. It's a rocker in the Elvis, Jerry Lee mould with a wonderful countrified version of the kind of solo heard in Bill Haley rockers. All About The Money is a nice little blues with some soothing guitar backing and fills. Drunkard's Paradise is a tribute to country music with a song like a Waylon Jennings or Merle Haggard epic "I can't find a reason to stay sober anymore." Get your mind around T-Bone Walker with added SRV for the instrumental Lone Star Blues. Omar's Boogie is another instrumental that does what it says on the box. Goin' Back To Texas is a fabulous slow blues for those of us who hanker for the Big Sky Country. The last track, Take Me Back, echoes, but is not locked to, Junior Parker's later EPs Mystery Train. If all that is not enough enjoy the slowest of slow blues with JLH's I'm Mad Again. Fantastic.

Do not expect blues rock, do not expect country blues, do not expect anything except consummate musicianship, infectious melodies and the sound of Omar and his pals having a great time. Don't miss this one.

Reviewer Ian McKenzie is English and is the editor of Blues In The South, [<http://www.bluesinthesouth.com>] a monthly blues information publication. He is the producer/ host of two blues radio shows Blues Before Midnight on KCOR (Kansas City Online Radio: www.kconlineradio.com) Fridays; and Wednesday's Even Worse on Phonic FM (www.phonic.fm) alternate Wednesdays.

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