



Reviews



Blues Duo CD review

June 1, 2011

"Canned Heat" Blues Duo featuring Tracy K. & Jamie Steinhoff (self released) 5 *****

This is the debut for an acoustic blues duo out of Thunder Bay, and I'll be shocked if you don't fall head over heels in love with "Canned Heat".

I liked this right away- it's a charming, likeable album that makes friends instantly. Tracy K's husky voice reminds me of Maria Muldaur, in particular the great blues & jug band albums she's been making lately. As a guitarist, Steinhoff's main area of enthusiasm is early folk & blues from the 1920's to 1940's, and he's a sublime player, his slide work particularly enjoyable. Tracy's harmonica is sparse and utilitarian but joyful, just right for this mix. These 10 tracks include some Tracy K originals and a few by Steinhoff too, including "Heaven's Joy (Olga's Song)", something she wrote for an aunt's funeral, a woman who used to tell her "Don't you stop singing!". You'll also find stuff done before by Memphis Minnie, Big Dave Mclean and more. "Canned Heat" sounds like a Saturday night on the back porch- absolutely beautiful. Sweet Spots: "Tailor Made", "Heaven's Joy", "Chauffeur Blues"
- John Kereiff, Rossland Radio Coop

Thursday, June 2, 2011

CD Review - Blues Duo "Canned Heat"

For old time Blues and Beyond, done right, I give "Canned Heat" my highest rating of 5*****.

Blues Duo consists of Tracy K and Jamie Steinhoff, with Tracy K being a very well known Canadian Recording Artist and Musician, and Jamie Steinhoff whom has remained, on the one hand, virtually unknown, yet on the other hand, is an extremely talented Artist who's dedication to folk & blues from the 1920s to 40s is revealed in his slide and fingerstyle guitar work and gritty soulful vocals . Other performers with Tracy K and Jamie on "Canned Heat" were Stuart Green (Snare on "Chauffeur Blues", "Cowboy Blues", and "Lovin' Sam"), David Angell (Bass on "Chauffeur Blues"), and Emily Kohne (Background Vocals on "Heaven's Joy"). In addition to Vocals, Tracy K plays Harmonica, as well as, Acoustic Guitar on "Heaven's Joy" and even plays Kazoo on Track 5 ("Everybody Loves My Baby"). Jamie Steinhoff also does Vocals and plays Guitar, Dobro, and Banjo.

"Canned Heat" comes across as Back Porch Blues in it's truest form. The songs are kept simple both musically and vocally. They also come across with a honest realism, especially the ones that only have Tracy K and Jamie Steinhoff performing, which number 6 of the Album's 10 Tracks. From the selection of the songs chosen for "Canned Heat", which at least among the Covers, one gets the great feel for the blues music coming out of the era of the early 20's and the Originals done on this Album help to keep that cohesive thread going.

As for my Favorites on "Canned Heat", it is hard to pick just a couple, but certainly I love it when the old Kazoo is brought out as it was on "Everybody Loves My Baby" and "Chauffeur Blues" also caught my attention, right away, with it's opening which could of easily been from the song "Good Morning Little School Girl". I must say, I really love the Blues when it is offered in it's simplest form, after all that is where it originated from. "Canned Heat" does a very fine job of taking us back to the simpler times of the Blues, and masterfully so. I truly hope that Tracy K and Jamie Steinhoff continue as Blues Duo and in doing so, offer us much more of the same in the future, from these immensely talented Artists. - John Vermilyea (Blues Underground Network)

Blues Duo CD Release, Hugh's Room, Toronto

A warm reception greeted this blues duo at their CD Release at Hugh's Room and it was most deserved. Based in Thunder Bay, Tracy K, on vocals & harmonica & Jamie 'Snakeman' Steinhoff, on vocals, guitar, dobro & banjo, provide a program of pre-war blues and originals highlighted by excellent rapport & expert playing. Their vocals are assured & confident. The pre-war songs open the disc, with special mention going to Barbeque Bob's "Atlanta Moan", a tribute to Big Dave McLean, whose status as role model & mentor cannot be overestimated. I think he would be pleased with this version of his signature tune. Jamie's hokum-styled "Diddy-Wah-So" belongs in this sequence. The sequence of originals that follows is more contemporary: Tracy's love song, "Tailor Made" and "Cowboy Blues", about a lost love. Contemporary or not, they are excellent songs, sung beautifully. They sell homemade jelly & salsa at their shows as well and lighten the mood a bit with the tale of getting the ingredients in "Stolen Apple Jelly". Tracy was asked to sing at an aunt's funeral and wrote a song for the occasion. She unfortunately has had to sing it a couple of more times since and here, ending the disc on a somber note, she sings it with her daughter, Emily. They've called themselves Canada's Paul Rishell & Annie Raines and I for one like to think they're at least as good as that veteran duo. The web site is www.tracyk.ca. - J.Valentyn, Toronto Blues Society

CD Review - Blues Duo - Canned Heat

The Canned Heat referred to here is not the sixties band fronted by Bob "the Bear" Hite, but a combustible material called sterno, used in fondue burners. Sterno was often drunk after straining through bread and it was this which eventually killed the songs author Tommy Johnson. It serves however to introduce two new names from the north of Ontario, Canada. Tracy K on vocals and harmonica and Jamie Snakeman Steinhoff on vocals, acoustic guitars, dobro and banjo. Throughout this release, Steinhoff displays a masterful style of fingerpicking, perhaps best demonstrated on the mournful blues of "Atlanta Moan", a tribute to Canadian Blues icon Big Dave McLean. Tracy K's vocals are confident and solid while she displays a mean capability on harp. "Canned Heat" marries five traditional acoustic Folk Blues with five acoustic originals. "Everybody Loves My Baby" by Spencer Williams/Jack Palmer is given a makeover with some great kazoo playing midway. Tracy's "Tailor Made", a joyful song about love, exudes rare warmth with two beautiful acoustic guitars complementing one another. "Cowboy Blues" is a beautiful rag which highlights Snakeman's dobro picking. "Stolen Apple Jelly" features Snakeman on vocals in a humorous song around a subject that most of us have all partaken in, stealing apples. Here, I believe the difference between the vocal abilities of the two band members are at their greatest, Snakeman can play but in comparison to Tracy, leaves a lot to be desired in the vocal department. However this is about the only complaint I can level at this very enjoyable acoustic outing. Closing the CD is a very poignant song "Heaven's Joy (Olga's Song)", written to be sung at her Aunt's funeral. Her daughter Emily harmonizes with her and it is a beautiful ending to this album. - Merv Osborne, Blues Matters magazine