

Robin Sylar - Tricked Out

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Yes, we ranted and raved about Sylar in RB #25 and now we have an opportunity to do it again and even louder than before. Wes Race's favorite Texas guitar slinger has a persona that one can compare with other slightly off-kilter geniuses like Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Thurman Valentine and Hasil Adkins but none of them ever picked up a guitar style that sounded like a cross between Link Wray and U.P. Wilson. This is hillbilly roadhouse Blues at its' deranged (but serious!) best and I wish I could think of someone else who occupies that genre but Sylar is the onliest one that comes to mind.

He's long ago mastered every guitar style and probably laughs at all the press given to up and coming guitar-wankers so it's time to get inventively deranged and have a helluva good time. This is Blues guitar satire-with-a-razor and I'm sure every veteran picker out there will find this disc highly entertaining and maybe not take themselves and their art' so damn seriously after hearing Sylar tear up standards and classics like "Heart Of Stone", "Shakin' All Over", "Iko Iko", "Can't Judge A Book By The Cover", "Pipeline" and "Hand Jive". On "Miserlou", the surf classic, Robin toys with guitar pyrotechnics as though he was playing in his sleep (with one hand behind his back). And just to show he can still lay down a scary deadly serious Blues, he tears up Buddy Guy's "Watch Yourself" (titled "Pretty Girls" here) with leads that tear up barbed wire. For those history buffs out there; Robin Sylar got his start in 1962 - 63 in Texas and has been a member of the Doyle Bramhall Band, KrackerJack (with Stevie Ray Vaughan and Tommy Shannon and Uncle John Turner) before going to California in 1971 to join James Harman and then on to Canned Heat for a year. Yikes!

So on this CD, Sylar plays guitar, bass, lap steel, organ piano, harmonica (and he sings too!) while drums goes to the 3-some of Bobby Baronowski, Kevin Schermerhorn, and Mark Wilson, bass goes to Homer Henderson (best in Texas?), Eric Mathew, backing vocals on two tracks the big voiced Johnny Mack (who sings lead on "Sugar Bee"). At the risk of being declared "politically incorrect" by the Pansy Police (who condemn us for promoting a "negative image" of Blues artists by using our bottle rating system) I'll say that this disc makes me want to go out and get wrecked as I'm sure it sounds even better when one is feelin' no pain and Sylar is probably the greatest live Blues party in existence. "Misirlou" will have many guitar hopefuls feeling insecure and that the man pulls it off totally live' is a tribute to his prowess. I wish that everyone who cherishes good time, rompin', stompin', turd-kickin', boogie Blues (we always try to capitalize the term Blues as a sign of respect) gets a copy of this monster of a Texas Blues masterpiece. And what's so ironic is that one gets the impression that the fame/success game don't motivate Sylar in the least. He's here for all the right reasons.

Let's party and "have-some-fun-'cause-when-you're-dead-you're-done" and if you feel like dancin' on your table (to hell with bouncers!), then this should be your soundtrack. As great as Sylar's last CD was, he's outdone himself here and Richard Chalk of TopCat was right when he told me, "I Know this is gonna be a hit...everywhere!" Yes, Richard, you and Robin have a hit disc. Just what the music world needs in 2004: kick-ass boogie from Texas. 6 big empty tequila bottles for this sucker!

A Grigg

