

BLUES BLAST MAGAZINE



The Planetary Blues Band – *Once Upon A Time In The South Loop*

Self-released CD

www.planetaryblues.com

10 songs – 39 minutes

Composed of three brothers and a family friend from Valparaiso, Indiana, about 60 miles southeast of downtown Chicago, the Planetary Blues Band has been building a strong and well-deserved following in Middle America, as this disc demonstrates. Siblings Martin (guitar

and lead vocals), Michael (guitar and vocals) and Bobby (bass) Schaefer-Murray hooked up with drummer Nick Evans and began practicing in their mother's basement in 1999.

Originally conceived as a rock band with heavy blues influences, primarily Buddy Guy and Son Seals, they've developed into a solid, in-the-pocket, straight-ahead blues ensemble as they've grown into adulthood. They've been working regularly at some of the best clubs in the country, including the Slippery Noodle in Indianapolis, Huey's in Memphis and Guy's own club, Legends, in the Windy City's South Loop, hence the name of their self-produced CD. While they lack the vocal power of Trampled Under Foot and the pyrotechnic display of the Homemade Jamz Band, two other family organizations, they've quickly building a positive.

The disc kicks off with a thoroughly modern take on one of the oldest blues standards, Blind Lemon Jefferson's "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean." A simple, staccato drum line quickly gives way to the vocals, which are supported by regularly repeating eight-note guitar riff. The band mixes two more cover songs with seven originals in the 10-tune set. "The Thorns Will Show You" is a modern blues driven forward by another repetitive guitar run with a screeching solo mid-tune. Martin's vocals, although somewhat limited in range, are strong and clear, the rhythm section on top of the beat, but arranged in a manner that drives the songs forward.

"This Precious Existence" is a slow, pleasant blues with a positive message about acceptance and cooperation to make it through the travails of life. Next up is a modern take on "That's No Way To Get Along," a track laid down by the Rev. Robert

Wilkins about 70 years before the band members were born. Martin's vocals carry the song over a light, traditional guitar line until the middle measures, when the drums kick into high gear and the guitars are set free. The band gets funky with the powerful "Sacred And Profane Blues," an image-filled complaint about folks who revere their religion rather using it by helping out the poor. "Blues Resurrection" is another strong, slow-paced grinding original, with the band wondering if the blues is still alive, but convinced that it won't let them be.

The mood changes dramatically with "Crazy Cryin' Blues," a fast-paced rock version of the Memphis Minnie classic. "In A Blue Study" leads into "When I Say I Love You," which simply states that the singer knows the object of his affection doesn't recognize the depth of his love simply by the way she acts. "The Shillelagh" finishes the set. It's a guitar-driven instrumental shuffle that kicks off in the style of Freddie King but evolves quickly into something more before returning to the root.

This is a solid set from a band on the rise. It'll be interesting what they have to say for themselves as they progress. It's available through the Planetary website or CDBaby.

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