

Tinsley Ellis – Midnight Blue (2014)

Written by bluesever

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01 – If The River Keeps Rising 02 – Mouth Turn Dry 03 – Surrender 04 – It's Not Funny 05 – See No Harm 06 – The Only Thing 07 – Peace And Love 08 – Harder To Find 09 – That's My Story 10 – Kiss Of Death Tinsley Ellis (vocals, guitar) Kevin McKendree (piano, organ) Ted Pecchio (acoustic bass, electric bass) Lynn Williams (drums, percussion)

What do Blind Willie McTell, Big Maceo Merriweather, Sean Costello, and Tinsley Ellis have in common? They're fantastic guitarists, prolific songwriters, and all from Atlanta! Three of the artists have passed away, but Ellis is still going strong after more than twenty years and ten albums. On his latest one, released this year, the shade of his music is "Midnight Blue." It's definitely more on the "rock" side of blues rock, with a few mellow ballads thrown in, but nevertheless engaging. Performing with him are Kevin McKendree on organs and pianos, Lynn Williams on drums and percussion, and Ted Pecchio on electric and acoustic bass. Due to his reputation, Ellis faces a wonderful dilemma: How will he top previous CDs? To be sure, his raucous energy packs as much of a punch as ever. It makes these three original songs big winners:

Track 04: "It's Not Funny" – This New Orleans-inspired anthem proves that sometimes, the often-overlooked drums are more than a match for sizzling slide guitar. With a rollicking beat and catchy chorus, it's sure to be on playlists everywhere: "Can't live without, there ain't no doubt, there ain't nothing like that gal of mine. Flirtatious love, bodacious 'cause ain't no girl that's half as fine." Lynn Williams and Kevin McKendree strut their stuff in style, as well as our lead singer and guitarist. "It's Not Funny" how danceable this track is, so grab a partner or play a hand jive if you don't have one.

Track 05: "See No Harm" – Nine times out of ten, blues songs about cheating are full of anger and regret. This is the proverbial tenth time, when our narrator has no qualms about it: "Most

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would think it's wrong for us to carry on. I just don't care; our love's that strong. You may not think it's true, but I see no harm in loving you." This attitude may be poignant, but it got such literary legends as Anna Karenina and Madame Bovary in fatal trouble. "Stop by or take it all!" Ellis pleads in an ultimatum. What will be his lover's answer? Only time will tell, and Tinsley leaves it up to listeners' imaginations.

Track 10: "Kiss of Death" – The CD's final number, like its title, has a pure blues hue. Rather than rip-snorting riffs, "Kiss of Death" possesses sensual, melodic chords. "Might as well drink gasoline," our protagonist grumbles to an unwilling partner. "Loving you's the kiss of death for me." Devotees of Stevie Ray Vaughan and the Allman Brothers will wish this ballad was first instead of last, but there's a proverb about "saving the best...."

Without a doubt, Tinsley Ellis is a guitar monster, but he need not always roar. At times his instrumentation overwhelms his vocals, making it hard to understand and quote particular lyrics. Despite this, "Midnight Blue" might be blues fans' new favorite color! ---
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