Groundhogs - Solid (1974)

1. Light My Light - 6:24 2. Free From All Alarm - 5:10 3. Sins Of The Father - 5:27 4. Sad Go Round - 2:52 5. Corn Cob - 5:32 6. Plea Sing, Plea Song - 2:57 7. Snow Storm - 3:27 8. Joker's Grave - 8:39 9. Over Blue (B-Side) - 2:46 - Tony McPhee - Gibson SG, Fender Stratocaster, Yamaha Acoustic, ARP 2600 Synthesiser, Mellotron, Synth Hi Fi, Audio Design Phaser,Vari-pitch Revox, Vocals - Peter Cruickshank - Zemaitis Bass - Clive Brooks - Ludwig Drums

On the surface, the Groundhogs could easily have become one of the dozens of British "blooze and boogie" bands that cropped up in the late '60s and early '70s in the manner of Savoy Brown or Foghat, but Tony (T.S.) McPhee's ideas and ambitions were just eccentric enough to push the band into directions too challenging for most mainstream listeners, and as with much of their catalog it's McPhee's sense of invention that makes 1974's Solid memorable. Recorded in McPhee's home studio with Clive Brooks on drums and Peter Cruickshank on bass, most of Solid's nine numbers are anchored by the sonic overdrive of McPhee's guitar playing, which twists blues figures through psych and progressive frameworks, while the doomy poetics of his lyrics don't so much establish the mood of the songs as reinforce the tone of the music. While Brooks and Cruickshank are a fine rhythm section, giving these songs the muscle and backbone to make the most of their hard rock leanings, this is obviously McPhee's show, and an impressive show it is. Not too many guys would think to lay a Mellotron or a fuzzy synthesizer over a heavy blues jam, or run his recordings through such a remarkable maze of phase shifting and ping-pong panning, but in his own small way McPhee's music is in the grand tradition of the great eccentrics of British rock, and that windmill-tilting spirit is what Solid is all about -- it's not a freak masterpiece like Thank Christ for the Bomb or Who Will Save the World?, but if you dug the twists and turns of those albums you owe it to yourself to give this a listen. ---Mark Deming, allmusic.com

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