

Guitar Shorty - Bare Knuckle (2010)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Please Mr. President* [04:14] 02. *Too Hard To Love You* [03:45] 03. *The Sting* [03:22]
04. *Slow Burn* [05:09] 05. *True Lies* [04:15] 06. *Texas Women* [04:24] 07. *Too Late* [04:15]
08. *Neverland* [03:59] 09. *Betrayed* [05:52] 10. *Get Off* [03:17] 11. *Bad Memory* [03:48] 12.
Temporary Man [03:29] Guitar Shorty - guitar, vocals Wizard - bass (producer) Alex
Alessandroni - keyboards Spasey T., Rickey Rouse - rhythm guitar Harold Seay - drums Vida
Simon – organ

For better than five decades now, David "Guitar Shorty" Kearney has pursued his own unique, guitar-driven vision of the blues. A major influence on fellow blues guitarists like Buddy Guy and Jimi Hendrix (Kearney was even married to Jimi's step-sister for a while), Guitar Shorty's blues-rock playing style is as physical and unpredictable as heavyweight boxing match....

The pugilistic style of his explosive fretboard-bashing makes the title of *Bare Knuckle*, Guitar Shorty's first album in almost four years, oddly appropriate. Following up on his Blues Music Award-winning 2006 album *We The People*, Guitar Shorty has delivered another strong set of performances that showcase his rugged, tuff-as-nails six-string pyrotechnics. Guitar Shorty's *Bare Knuckle*

For a few fleeting seconds, one might be fooled by the gentle intro of "Please Mr. President," the opening track on Guitar Shorty's *Bare Knuckle*. An elegant finger-picked intro fades away as the band kicks in and Shorty's flamethrower guitar muscles into the mix. The song itself is a great example of the frequent topicality of the blues, as Kearney sings of the need for a little "stimulus" in his personal economy. With diving and swooping guitar licks, his ragged, resilient fretwork reinforces the positive statement of the lyrics.

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It's at this point that Bare Knuckle settles in and readies itself for eleven more rounds of incendiary six-string work and Guitar Shorty's rough-hewn, soul-drenched vocals set to a blustery, powerful blues-rock soundtrack. "Too Hard To Love You" relies on a slip-n-slide, funk-i-fied rhythm while Kearney's biting guitarplay supports his tale of romantic woe. The talking blues lyrics of "Slow Burn" share another down-on-your-luck tale of financial and social hardship, Guitar Shorty's spoken vocals mustering more anger and outrage than one might expect, the words giving way to iron-fisted solos that drive the point home faster and harder than a ten-pound sledge.

Guitar Shorty's co-written original "Texas Women" is a sly little slice of soul-blues with a little Lone Star flavor (think Albert King), a loping funky rhythmic backdrop, and Kearney's passionate vocals, which themselves are punctuated by his bright, wiry guitar licks. Another original, "Too Late," is even smoother with Kearney displaying great ringing guitar tone and mournful vocals on this tale of love and betrayal, his jagged guitar cutting into the lyrics and serving to enhance the emotional ambiance of the song.

Kearney is nothing if not full of surprises, and the exotic rhythms of "Neverland" do nothing to mask the scorching guitar solos or the venom of the lyrics that rise above the bossa nova beats. Written by Guitar Shorty's long-time bassist Wyzard, "Betrayed" is a 1970s-styled blues-burner that owes its more dignified moments to B.B. King, and it's truly angry moments to Stevie Ray Vaughan, Kearney's guitarwork soaring above the mix and mixing it up between King-styled elegance and Vaughan-influenced muscle. A cover of Dennis Jones' "Temporary Man" is appropriate, the younger guitarist obviously a Guitar Shorty disciple. The song itself sizzles and burns like white phosphorus with loud, lightning-quick licks falling from the fretboard like bullets from a gun.

Some of these young pups coming up with dreams of being the next blues-rock chart topper should bow their heads and give props to a master of the genre, Mr. Guitar Shorty. The songs on Bare Knuckle hit your ears like a bluesy brawl, leaving the listener dazed and confused in their wake. There are enough screaming notes and tortured riffs in these grooves to satisfy any blues-rock guitar fan, while Guitar Shorty delivers just enough Chicago blues styled traditionalism to pacify all but the most hidebound old-school purist.

You won't find anything groundbreaking or revolutionary on Bare Knuckle, but you will find a walloping good time...and in these troubled days and times, that's often more than enough... ---
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