

Marcus Malone - A Better Man (2017)

Written by bluesever

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1. *House Of Blues* (4:17) 2. *Better Man* (5:05) 3. *Too Long Gone* (4:06) 4. *Just Another Heartache* (3:09) 5. *Feelin' Bad Blues* (3:09) 6. *Philomene* (3:40) 7. *Complications* (3:39) 8. *The Only One* (4:13) 9. *Stand Up (Love Of Life)* (3:33) 10. *In Your Arms* (4:40) 11. *Cant Go Back* (4:04) 12. *Shine Your Light* (4:17) Lead vocals, guitar - Marcus Malone Drums – Christopher Nugent Bass – Winston Blissett Harmonica – Alan Glen Percussion – Paul Elliot

So you like a bit of blues-rock, do you? Well get ready to be knocked out by Marcus Malone's new album *A Better Man* – and I mean floored by a sound that socks you between the ears with its big, fat production. I tell you, right from the opening bars of 'House Of Blues', with Malone's soulful baritone surfing a wave of magnificently meaty rhythm guitar from Sean Malone on a son-of-Peter-Gunn riff, this is a sound Martin Birch would have been happy to achieve with Whitesnake.

It's tempting to look for comparisons with other artists and bands when listening to *A Better Man*. But mostly it sounds like – well, Marcus Malone and his familiar band of co-conspirators. So get ready for some rockin' blues tunes, some walloping good riffs (with the occasional homage, shall we say, to some classics), some spot-on high harmonies, and a few guitar harmony licks into the bargain. You also get the odd corny lyric here and there, but hey, what the hell?

So check out the massive crunch of the 'Owner Of A Lonely Heart'-like riff on the title track. Check out the slide solos from Stuart Dixon and Julian Burdock and blazing harp from Alan Glen on 'Too Long Gone', over Chris Nugent's shuffling drum rhythm. Check out the 21st century grandchild of 'Shakin' All Over' that is 'Philomene', with its chirping organ from Moz Gamble and winning exhortation to "shimmy shimmy shimmy, shake'n'shake'shake". Check out

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'Can't Go Back' and its 'Heartbreaker' riff. Check out – well, you get the picture.

Marcus has a few other song-writing strings to his bow though. There's the AOR soul of 'Stand Up (Love Of Life)' for example. 'In Your Arms' is a Foreigner-style slice of reflection – though with a lead vocal about an octave lower than Lou Gramm – that culminates in a cascade of highly polished vocal harmonies. 'Feelin' Bad Blues' goes for an easy-going down home porch vibe, opening over a simple, stomping kick drum and featuring honky tonk keys from Gamble. Most remarkably, 'The Only One' heads off into Byrds territory, with a psychedelic guitar wig-out from Sean Nolan while Chris Nugent belts the living daylights out of his kit.

I could go on. The point is that Marcus and chums may not do anything wildly original, but they do it very, very well. If David Coverdale were able to make an album like this nowadays, instead of fannying about with retreads of Purple tracks, he'd win back a lot of listeners from days gone by. Mind you, he'd have to match Marcus Malone's vocals too.

So strap yourself in front of your speakers, and get ready to have the blues rocked out of you!
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