Foghat – Stone Blues (1978)

1 Stone Blue 2 Sweet Home Chicago 3 Easy Money 4 Midnight Madness 5 It Hurts Me Too 6 High On Love 7 Chevrolet 8 Stay With Me Bass – Craig MacGregor Drums – Roger Earl Lead Guitar, Slide Guitar, Acoustic Guitar, Dobro – Rod Price Lead Vocals, Guitar, Backing Vocals [Harmonies] – Lonesome Dave Peverett

After racking up huge sales with Live, Foghat found themselves forced to choose between staying a hard rock cult group or trying to expand their success and become a full-on commercial phenomenon. They decided to experiment with adding a commercial edge to their sound and hired producing wiz Eddie Kramer (knob-twiddler for Jimi Hendrix and Kiss) to help them find the right balance between guitar power and studio gloss. Sadly, the resulting album, Stone Blue, is only intermittently successful because it never finds the right balance to make this compromise work. A good example is the title track: It has all the energy of a classic Foghat track and adds in some nice vocal harmonies, but it lacks the thick, bass-heavy bottom end and the bluesy edge that fuelled the band's best songs. This sonic schizophrenia goes even further on faceless songs like "High on Love" and "Easy Money," which sound like they could have been cut by any 1970s AOR band. Despite these moments of stylistic confusion, Foghat's old strengths manage to shine through on occasion: "It Hurts Me Too" is an impressive blues cover that features a searing vocal performance from Lonesome Dave Peverett, and "Chevrolet" successfully marries boogie rock riffs to a slick studio sound. However, the lack of a consistent overall direction keeps Stone Blue from being the success it could have been. In the end, it offers enough solid tracks to please the hardcore Foghat fan but casual listeners would better off checking out Fool for the City or Live for a better, more consistent idea of the group's strengths. ---Donald A. Guarisco, AllMusic Review

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