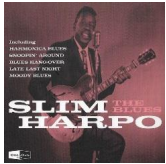


Slim Harpo - The Blues (2013)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 14 November 2016 14:35 -

Slim Harpo - The Blues (2013)



1. *I Got Love If You Want It* (2:50) 2. *I'm A King Bee* (3:06) 3. *Wonderin' And Worryin'* (2:08)
4. *You'll Be Sorry One Day* (2:17) 5. *Strange Love* (2:10) 6. *One More Day* (2:15) 7. *My Home Is A Prison* (2:58) 8. *Late Last Night* (2:40) 9. *Harmonica Blues* (2:01) 10. *What A Dream* (3:07) 11. *Blues Hang-Over* (3:07) 12. *That Ain't Your Business* (2:16) 13. *Bobby-Sox Baby* (1:38) 14. *Rainin' In My Heart* (2:56) 15. *Snoopin' Around* (2:16) 16. *Dream Girl* (3:23) 17. *This Ain't No Place For Me* (4:10) 18. *I Got Love If You Want It (Alternate)* (2:55) 19. *Buzz Me Baby* (2:16) 20. *Talking Blues* (2:13) 21. *One Of These Days* (2:42) 22. *Moody Blues* (2:57) 23. *Dream Girl (Alternate)* (3:10) 24. *My Little Queen Bee* (2:27) 25. *Don't Start Cryin' Now* (2:10)

In the large stable of blues talent that Crowley, LA, producer Jay Miller recorded for the Nashville-based Excello label, no one enjoyed more mainstream success than Slim Harpo. Just a shade behind Lightnin' Slim in local popularity, Harpo played both guitar and neck-rack harmonica in a more down-home approximation of Jimmy Reed, with a few discernible, and distinctive, differences. Harpo's music was certainly more laid-back than Reed's, if such a notion was possible. But the rhythm was insistent and, overall, Harpo was more adaptable than Reed or most other bluesmen. His material not only made the national charts, but also proved to be quite adaptable for white artists on both sides of the Atlantic, including the Rolling Stones, Yardbirds, Kinks, Dave Edmunds with Love Sculpture, Van Morrison with Them, Sun rockabilly singer Warren Smith, Hank Williams, Jr., and the Fabulous Thunderbirds.

A people-pleasing club entertainer, he certainly wasn't above working rock & roll rhythms into his music, along with hard-stressed, country & western vocal inflections. Several of his best tunes were co-written with his wife Lovelle and show a fine hand for song construction, appearing to have arrived at the studio pretty well formed. His harmonica playing was driving and straightforward, full of surprising melody, while his vocals were perhaps best described by writer Peter Guralnick as "if a black country & western singer or a white rhythm & blues singer were attempting to impersonate a member of the opposite genre." And here perhaps was

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Harpo's true genius, and what has allowed his music to have a wider currency. By the time his first single became a Southern jukebox favorite, his songs were being adapted and played by white musicians left and right. Here was good-time Saturday-night blues that could be sung by elements of the Caucasian persuasion with a straight face. Nothing resembling the emotional investment of a Howlin' Wolf or a Muddy Waters was required; it all came natural and easy, and its influence has stood the test of time.

He was born James Moore just outside of Baton Rouge, LA. After his parents died, he dropped out of school to work every juke joint, street corner, picnic, and house rent party that came his way. By this time he had acquired the alias of Harmonica Slim, which he used until his first record was released. It was fellow bluesman Lightnin' Slim who first steered him to local recordman J.D. Miller. The producer used him as an accompanist to Hopkins on a half-dozen sides before recording him on his own. When it came time to release his first single ("I'm a King Bee"), Miller informed him that there was another Harmonica Slim recording on the West Coast, and a new name was needed before the record could come out. Moore's wife took the slang word for harmonica, added an "o" to the end of it, and a new stage name was the result, one that would stay with Slim Harpo the rest of his career.

Harpo's first record became a double-sided R&B hit, spawning numerous follow-ups on the "King Bee" theme, but even bigger was "Rainin' in My Heart," which made the Billboard Top 40 pop charts in the summer of 1961. It was another perfect distillation of Harpo's across-the-board appeal, and was immediately adapted by country, Cajun, and rock & roll musicians; anybody could play it and sound good doing it. In the wake of the Rolling Stones covering "I'm a King Bee" on their first album, Slim had the biggest hit of his career in 1966 with "Baby, Scratch My Back." Harpo described it "as an attempt at rock & roll for me," and its appearance in Billboard's Top 20 pop charts prompted the dance-oriented follow-ups "Tip on In" and "Tee-Ni-Nee-Ni-Nu," both R&B charters. For the first time in his career, Harpo appeared in such far-flung locales as Los Angeles and New York City. Flush with success, he contacted Lightnin' Slim, who was now residing outside of Detroit, MI. The two reunited and formed a band, touring together as a sort of blues mini-package to appreciative white rock audiences until the end of the decade. The new year beckoned with a tour of Europe (his first ever) all firmed up, and a recording session scheduled when he arrived in London. Unexplainably, Harpo -- who had never been plagued with any ailments stronger than a common cold -- suddenly succumbed to a heart attack on January 31, 1970. ---Cub Coda, Rovi

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