

Booker T Jones – Potato Hole (2009)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 10 October 2009 15:09 - Last Updated Monday, 27 November 2017 14:53

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01. *Pound It Out* 02. *She Breaks* 03. *Hey Ya* (Outkast cover) 04. *Native New Yorker* 05. *Nan* 06. *Warped Sister* 07. *Get Behind The Mule* (Tow Waits cover) 08. *Reunion Time* 09. *Potato Hole* 10. *Space City* (Drive By Truckers cover) Musicians: Booker T. Jones - Guitar (Acoustic), Guitar (Electric), Organ John Neff - Guitar, Pedal Steel Guitar Mike Cooley – Guitar Neil Young - Guitar Shonna Tucker - Bass Lenny Castro – Percussion Brad Morgan – Drums

Potato Hole is Booker T. Jones' first solo album in two decades and the early buzz in the media has already termed it his most "audacious," but that's not exactly the case with this new set. It isn't audacious so much as it is moderately predictable, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Recorded quickly with producer Rob Schnapf in Georgia and California, Jones is backed here by Athens, GA's Drive-By Truckers with Neil Young sitting in on electric guitar for nine of the ten tracks, most of which were written by Jones. This isn't the MGs, and nothing here is close to being as timeless as "Green Onions," but the album is a pleasant listen with a nice, funky, and kind of grungy groove that settles into a deep pocket, even if it never really completely catches fire. There's plenty of Jones' Hammond B-3, of course, but he branches out and plays both acoustic and electric guitar on the title track, and with up to five guitars going on some tracks, this is almost as much an instrumental guitar album as it is an organ one. If there's really anything audacious here, it would be the cover of Outkast's "Hey Ya," which sputters around more than it grooves, and Jones' B-3 lines simply can't approximate the sassy joy of André 3000's original vocal. Jones also covers Tom Waits' "Get Behind the Mule," which comes off more successfully, although, again, one misses Waits' vocal. The final cut, "Space City," is a lovely chill-out instrumental while the opening track, "Pound It Out," does exactly that, pounding things out, full of fuzzed-out guitars. Young, for those wondering, doesn't take over anything here but remains the consummate session player, showing a delicate sensibility on guitar that one wishes he'd apply more often to his own work. Again, there's no "Green Onions" track here, and nothing that'll end up as everyone's ringtone. Potato Hole isn't a slab of greasy Stax soul, either. It is what it is, a new Booker T. Jones album, and hopefully it won't take another 20 years to get to the next one. --- Steve Leggett, allmusic.com

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