

Mannish Boys - Lowdown Feelin' (2008)

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1. *These Kind of Blues* 4:02
2. *Searchin' Blues* 3:45
3. *Low Down Feeling* 4:10
4. *Chocolate Drop* 3:04
5. *If the Washing Don't Get You, the Rinsing Will* 3:28
6. *Need My Baby* 3:43
7. *The Same Thing* 4:37
8. *The Woodchuck* 4:36
9. *Fine Lookin' Woman* 4:26
10. *You Don't Love Me* 5:09
11. *Figure Head* 4:57
12. *Rude Groove* 7:51
13. *When I Leave* 4:35
14. *Good Times* 4:46
15. *Something's Wrong* 3:14
16. *Reet, Petite and Gone* 2:31
17. *Dead Letter Blues* 3:49

Little Sammy Davis, Randy Chortkoff (vocals, harmonica); Finis Tasby, Bobby Lee Jones, Johnny Dyer (vocals); Kid Ramos (guitar, acoustic guitar); Ronnie James Weber (guitar, upright bass, electric bass); Junior Watson (guitar); Fred Scribner (slide guitar); Lynwood Slim (harmonica); David Woodford (tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone); Scott Steen (trumpet); Fred Kaplan (piano); Tom Leavey (electric bass); Cynthia Manley (background vocals).

There are no fewer than 20 musicians contributing to the Mannish Boys' fourth release, which makes this album more the product of a collective or revue than an actual band. Despite the players changing on nearly every tune, this is nevertheless a strong and surprisingly cohesive set of Chicago styled blues originals and a few choice covers that click due to the talents of those involved. Producer and label owner Randy Chortkoff emphasizes that there is no digital

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recording involved and few overdubs, which makes for a rootsy, down-home blues stew that breathes. Veteran singer Finis Tasby only appears on three tracks but one of them, a cover of "If the Washing Don't Get You, the Rinsing Will," (best known from Albert King's version), featuring a stinging guitar solo from Kirk "Eli" Fletcher, is one of this disc's highlights. Old-school harpist/vocalist Little Sammy Davis joins to cover two of his own songs and is a classy addition to the revolving door lineup. Covers of Billy "The Kid" Emerson's "The Woodchuck," Texas Pete Mayes' title track, and Howlin' Wolf's obscure pre-Chess recording "Chocolate Drop" show how deep this group digs for interesting material. Not so much for yet another version of Willie Cobbs' "You Don't Love Me" (as an instrumental with a rugged guitar solo from Fletcher) or Willie Dixon's "The Same Thing," even if both are given spirited readings. Chortkoff takes the lead on his own "Rude Groove," little more than a rewrite of Sonny Boy Williamson's "Help Me" but urged along mightily by tough six-string leads from Frank "Paris Slim" Goldwasser and guest Kid Ramos, along with Fred Kaplan's mighty B-3 and Chortkoff's harp. Another old timer, Johnny Dyer, sings with requisite down and out emotion and a distinct Muddy Waters inflection as Al Blake does the harp duties on the slow blues of "Good Times." There's not a bland or rote moment throughout this long -- 73-minute, 17-track -- but never boring disc. Even though you'll constantly be checking the credits to figure out who is playing and singing, the results are worth the effort. ---Hal Horowitz, AllMusic Review

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