

Steven Seagal – Mojo Priest (2006)

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01. *Somewhere In Between*
02. *Love Doctor*
03. *Dark Angel*
04. *Gunfire In A Juke Joint*
05. *My Time Is Numbered*
06. *Alligator Ass*
07. *BBQ*
08. *Hoochie Koochie Man*
09. *Talk To My Ass*
10. *Dust My Broom*
11. *Slow Boat To China*
12. *She Dat Pretty*
13. *Red Rooster*
14. *Shake*

Musicians: Steven Seagal - Drums, Guitar, Guitar (Rhythm), Vocals Big George Brock - Harp
Ruth Brown - Vocals Bo Diddley - Guitar (Rhythm), Vocals Kenny Green - Guitar Jack Holder
- Guitar (Rhythm) Jackie Johnson - Vocals (Background) Norris Johnson - Keyboards, Organ
(Hammond), Piano Bob Margolin - Slide Guitar Sam Shupe - Bass Hubert Sumlin - Guitar
(Rhythm) Ernest Williamson – Piano

Apparently, action movie actor Steven Seagal didn't toss in the towel after 2004's *Songs from the Crystal Cave*. That record couldn't make up its mind what it wanted it to be: adult contemporary, Triple AM, neo-soul, rock, or modern slick blues. *Mojo Priest* is a step up in terms of focus, and Seagal has learned how to use a recording studio. But here, he's focused on a kind of watered down, nocturnal form of urban blues. It's ultra-slick; perhaps because the studio engineer was none other than David Z.. The production is full of sheeny, high-end wash, with excellent backing vocals by Debra and Carla Barnes and Daunielle Hill. It's like a postmodern read of Chicago blues, but without the grittiness or immediacy. Everything here has been so carefully plotted out -- with the exception of the songwriting -- that it feels like a

by-the-numbers set list. Seagal's guitar playing, despite showcasing his Les Paul on the cover, leaves plenty to be desired. It rarely rises above bar band pedigree, and most of the time, isn't that good. On "Love Doctor," not even the mighty Ruth Brown can rescue this 12-bar disaster. She sounds shrill and harsh while Seagal's vocal is all buried in smoke and reverb. The guitar solo is laughable. "Dark Angel" creeps above the bar because of the killer slide work by Bob Margolin, but the lyrics are hilarious in that they lay out the eight-fold path to enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism, talking about nature of mind and protector deities. Margolin once more rescues the pathetic "Gunfire in a Juke Joint" from banality with his slide. Seagal's evocation of blues clichés would just be bad if it weren't so nauseatingly serious. All of this music takes itself so seriously that it borders on delusional excess. Check the cover: there's the man himself wearing thousand dollar threads, holding a pristine Les Paul; sitting on a chair on the front porch of some rundown shack. When he talks of drinking all the time, carrying a 45, and gambling constantly on "Gunfire in a Juke Joint," one has to wonder who he's trying to channel (perhaps he's trying to channel Robin Trower, who is trying to channel Jimi Hendrix, who is channeling Robert Johnson?). The intentionally swampy "Alligator Ass," with its phase shifted guitar and gospelized backing chorus and choogling Hammond B-3 just falls flat on its ass. "BBQ" sounds like it's trying to call forth Son Seals from the grave but the late, great bluesman is probably turning in it instead. Willie Dixon's "Hoochie Koochie Man" and Elmore James' "Dust My Broom" are so hopelessly clueless in terms of their spirit and execution that they should have been left off the disc, and Seagal should be put on trial for murdering them. On the poetically titled "Talk to My Ass," Seagal plays "guitar," "lead guitar," and "rhythm guitar" -- wha??? It's a tale of domestic disquiet that makes us root for the downtrodden wife. He duets with Bo Diddley on "Shake" that closes the formal set out. Also of interest is that players like Robert Lockwood, Jr., Homesick James, and Henry Townsend also played on the sessions and are given credit for "additional tracks" (the three mystery bonus cuts tacked on at the end). Seagal has given us another side of his ego on Mojo Priest -- as if we needed one -- no doubt encouraged by his manager, the notorious Miles Copeland. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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