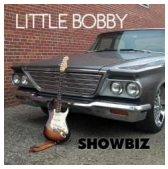
Little Bobby – Showbiz (2014)



1. Telephone Blues 2. Don't Take My Girl 3. Showbiz 4. Mercy Of The Blues 5. Yes It's True 6. Rather Go Blind 7. You Don't Know What It's Like 8. Upper Room One Day

Nobody ever said that playing the blues was easy.

However, it's the goal of blues musicians to make it appear that way, hiding countless hours of hard work behind seemingly-effortless performances. Not everyone can pull it off and be well-known in "Showbiz," although they certainly try their hardest.

This year, Minnesota's "Little Bobby" Houle (last name rhyming with 'pool') has put forth his latest CD in an ambitious spirit. He also performed at the Mississippi Valley Blues Festival in Davenport, IA this July. Photos of him from that event can be seen in the August 7, 2014 issue of BluesBlast. He may have sung some songs from "Showbiz" there.

Out of eight total tracks, the only cover is "I'd Rather Go Blind" by Etta James. The others are a mixture of blues, rock and soul. Sometimes the instrumentation doesn't quite mesh, and Little Bobby's vocals are rather raw and often buried in the mix. What makes him and his band tick? They give their all, musically and lyrically, but their unfocused style could benefit from fine-tuning.

2005 was his debut CD, Before the Storm, followed by 2007's Down, Dirty and Mean, 2008's I've Got a Woman, and a live DVD in 2009 called A Night at the Empire. He's performed at

concerts throughout the U.S. and Europe, including the RAWA Blues Festival in Katiwice, Poland and the Chicago Blues Festival. The Chicago Sun-Times rated Little Bobby and Nora Jean Bruso the number-one band to see. The site reads: “In 2011 the two put together the CD ‘Good Blues’, [which] Little Bobby not only played on but wrote and produced. The album not only appeared on the blues charts but helped push Nora Jean to her 7th BMA nomination for ‘Best Traditional Female Blues Performer.”

Little Bobby’s first instrument was the drums. He got his first set from his aunt and uncle. His passion soon changed and he was turned on by the sound of the guitar. His first influences were the blues style of Jimmy Page and [Jimi] Hendrix. He met another Indian brother, who one day told Bobby, “You have a blues voice.” Already being self-taught, the improvising style of the blues seemed like a natural fit. After getting a cheap recorder he laid down his first blues cut “Hey There Storm” and got his first radio spin on “The Riverside Blues Show.” From there Little Bobby was hooked on the blues.

In the liner notes to the album, Little Bobby says, “…I hope there will be a song on this CD that will help you through tough times or inspires you in your life.” Bobby, who played most of the instruments himself, also thanks saxophonist Maury Finney, drummer Michael “Taco” Valasquez, and second sax player Jimmy Wallace.

In “Showbiz,” at least as it relates to the blues, many are called but few are chosen. Houle has what it takes to make it big! Let’s hope he keeps on truckin’. --- bluesblastmagazine.com

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