Jimi Hendrix - Midnight Lightning (1975)

01. Trashman - 3:16 02. Midnight Lightning - 3:49 play 03. Hear My Train A Coming - 5:42 04. Gypsy Boy - 3:45 05. Blue Suede Shoes (Carl Perkins) - 3:28
play
06. Machine Gun - 7:28 07. Once I Had A Woman - 5:19 08. Beginnings (Mitch Mitchell) - 3:02

Personnel: - Jimi Hendrix - guitar, vocals - Bob Babbitt - bass - Jeff Mironov - guitar (01-03,05,08) - Lance Quinn - guitar (02,04,06,07) - Alan Schwartzberg - drums (01,02,04-08), shaker (03), percussion (04) - Jimmy Maeulin - percussion (02,08) - Maeretha Stewart, Hilda Harris, Vivian Cherry - backing vocals (02,04,07) - Mitch Mitchell - drums (03) - Buddy Lucas - harmonica (07)

The opening riff to "Foxey Lady" provides the foundation for the instrumental "Trash Man," and no amount of bastardization can take away from the genius guitarist his legacy. If you take this work at face value, without the baggage of what "producer" Alan Douglas did to the tapes, this time with Tony Bongiovi along for the ride, it's still Hendrix. Maybe God allowed the series of albums to happen so the world could see Hendrix's work could survive doctoring and musicians jamming with his art after the fact. That this disc goes for big bucks on Internet auction sites says something about the timelessness of the music. The title track, as with seven of the eight performances here, has session player Alan Schwartzberg on drums, a far cry from his work with Carole Bayer Sager. Mitch Mitchell only appears on Hendrix's blues classic "Hear My Train," Schwartzberg adding shakers. Bob Babbit is the "designated bassist" on the entire project (no doubt what Billy Cox and Noel Redding thought about this), and Jeff Mironov shares guitar duties with Lance Quinn. That's not a misprint. Thankfully, the extra guitarists are somewhat invisible -- you know, what's the point of having co-vocalists add their talents to a Janis Joplin disc? What these recordings effectively do is offer the world a comparison between what the official Hendrix estate is doing, and what Douglas did. The Hendrix estate wins that battle, Eddie Kramer and John McDermott carefully restoring all the master tapes of Jimi Hendrix, and restoring them properly. Discs like Midnight Lightning are also a statement on how a great artist's legacy can go through various hands and the artistic consequences of tapes traveling as if under their own steam. History is an excellent vantage point from which to view.

The title track is great -- and it goes along with the cover painting very nicely. Is it blasphemy to say that this is a highly enjoyable disc? All the post-Cry of Love releases -- War Heroes, Crash Landing, Voodoo Soup, Blues, Hendrix in the West, Rainbow Bridge, the soundtrack to the Jimi Hendrix film, and this -- provide another crucial look at Hendrix. The more the merrier. It is great to have the official Hendrix estate with Janie Hendrix, John McDermott, and Eddie Kramer doing this properly, but this version of "Gypsy Boy (New Rising Sun)," the inclusion of Mitch Mitchell's "Beginnings," another "Machine Gun," and "Blue Suede Shoes" exist, thus they are important additions to the Hendrix archives. It will be interesting to see if the official Hendrix estate eventually re-releases the Alan Douglas masters just to keep these once-legit works from cluttering the market with counterfeits. ---Joe Viglione, AllMusic Review

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