

Blue Yonder

Hard Garden
Hard Garden Music
(Self Released)
www.hardgarden.com
11 tracks/39:51



The Seattle-based trio's (Son Jack, Jr, Michael Wilde, Garrett Williams) debut album is a mix of delta blues with programmed backup to merge blues with electronic dance music. The album may well irritate purists of both. The band says the album's concept is to "...bring forward all that's appealing and meaningful about deep blues and give it a more contemporary feel. The blues is not unlike an old plot of land that was once fertile but has suffered from neglect over the years, and become a hard garden." Jack and Wilde are acclaimed traditional Delta blues artists but here they depart from the traditional to blaze new paths.

Consisting of ten original tracks and one cover ("Depot Blues"), the lyrics are frequently a bit dark. The vocals are deep, often growling. My favorite tracks are "I Can Tell" with its prominent harp and flamenco-style guitar instrumentals and the humorous "Pour Me Another", a lyrical twist about an increasingly libated bar patron and a talking dog.

This is not your mama's old style blues. Hard Garden takes the blues to an un-before travelled place. Starting in the Mississippi Delta, these young guys applied all sorts of technical stuff to their music to make it edgy and novel. I don't think you can be ambivalent to it, it is music that will make you either love it or hate it. When taken as an experiment as to where the blues can travel to, the listener will find it interesting even if they don't particularly like it.

Reviewed by Diane Mandell

Bluesoul

Terry Gillespie
Self Released
www.terrygillespie.ca
13 tracks/49:42



Canadian-born Gillespie has over 40 years as a bluesman. Called Canada's "King of Roots Music", Gillespie has played with blues legends like Howlin' Wolf, John Lee Hooker and Buddy Guy. Gillespie wrote most of the tracks, also doing Dylan-esque lead vocals, guitar, trumpet, and harp. Peter Measroch is masterful on the

keyboards. The music was recorded live at the 2012 Maxville Musicfest in Maxville, Ontario at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

Born in Canada and then raised in England and then as a teen in Michigan, Gillespie snuck into bars to listen to the likes of John Lee Hooker and Howlin' Wolf. At 6 feet tall, the 16 and 17 year old passed for 21 and wet his appetite for the blues in Michigan's blues bars. He moved back to Canada in 1968 and that has been his home since. He has dispelled demons in his life and now commits himself to his music and his love for Jaguar cars, Norton motorcycles and guitars.

Gillespie has been favorably compared to musicians like Mark Knopfler and listening to him and his band one can understand why. His blues blends in a firm understanding of jazz and African music and makes the listener sit up and take note.

This album is solidly rooted in the blues. My favorite tracks are the ones where Measroch's keyboards really shine: "Early In The Mornin'" (nice harp, too); "My Mama"; "It Wasn't Me"; "16 Days"; "She Walks Right In"; and "The Devil Likes To Win Reprise".

Gillespie delivers some great new songs an performances and the keyboard work is spectacular. If you like your keyboards upfront and your blues delivered authentically, give this one a listen.

Reviewed by Dian Mandell

Can't Shed A Tear

Jim Gustin & Truth Jones
Self Released
www.jimgustin.com
14 tracks/62:33



Gustin, a well-known Southern California composer, guitarist and vocalist, and the Truth Jones band deliver their brand of blues-rock-gospel-country in this debut album of 14 originals. Gustin's gutsy and raspy vocals are quite predominant throughout, although a few tracks highlight the Truth Jones band's lead singer, Jeri Goldenhar for a stark contrast to the gruff and tough sounds of Gustin. Goldenhar is an exceptional vocalist in her own right and more of her would have been welcome. Instrumentals on this CD are above par, with solid guitar, excellent keyboards, sax and a little harp now and then.

My favorite track is the New Orleans style "My Baby Just Left Me Again" with its playful piano and clarinet, along with some real nice slide guitar. I also enjoyed the guitar in the title track "Can't Shed A Tear" and "Beauty For Ashes". "No Faith In Forever" features some great sax as well as a duet between Gustin and Goldenhar. "If God Made Something Better" has some interesting lyrics and a grooving beat with some especially nice organ work.

If you like your blues with a Gospel tinged hard rocking edge, this one will intrigue you. Gustin provides a hard edge while Goldenhar displays a mellower side. The two are great counter points for each other and they and the band deliver some interesting tunes and performances.

Reviewed by Diane Mandell

35th Blues Music Awards 2014

Here is the basic schedule for the 2014 Blues Music Awards, the 35th year of these prestigious awards. When making your travel plans, rest assured that by the time May rolls around there will be plenty of other great musical events before and after the Blues Music Awards. There always is!

Official Events at Sheraton Memphis Downtown and, 250 North Main Street
Cook Convention Center, 255 North Main Street

Wednesday, May 7

6:00pm Hall of Fame Reception, Dinner and Induction presented by the Charter Members
10:00pm Big Llou's Blues Hall of Fame Tribute Jam (Raise the Roof! Fundraiser)
Hard Rock Cafe

Thursday, May 8

1:00pm - 3:00pm Health Fair & Screening Sheraton lobby
5:30pm The Party Begins reception featuring performances by 2014 Blues Music Award nominees. Grand Lobby, Convention Center
5:30-9:45pm Silent Auction & Blues Music Award Merchandise Sales Outside the Ballroom, Convention Center
7:00pm-1:00am -- Dinner, Awards & Nominee performances Ballroom, Convention Center

Additional Events: Friday May 9

7:00pm-10:00pm Beale Street Mess Around (Raise the Roof! fundraiser) Rum Boogie Cafe Hosted by Brandon Santini