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Review for Ottawa Blues Society Winter 2011 OBScene

"Tangled Roots"

Wayne Buttery & Roly Platt

2010 Independent

www.waynebuttery.com

Reviewed by James Doran

"Tangled Roots" hit my CD player a couple of months ago like a warm summer breeze off Georgian Bay (which isn't surprising since these two veteran Blues artists live nearby) - and I've been enjoying it immensely ever since. This is acoustic Blues as good as it gets. Wayne's baritone vocals and tasty guitar are counter-pointed and complimented beautifully by Roly's soaring, superb harmonica. (I think Roly Platt is one of Canada's best harp players and frequently gets overlooked. Glad to see he finally got nominated for a Maple Blues Award for Harmonica Player Of The Year this year - good luck in Toronto January 17th Roly!). Jon Warren on acoustic bass and Dennis King on drums add some excellent accompaniment on several songs as well.

Until now Wayne has been best known for his "big band" soul/R&B sound from Wayne Buttery & The Groove Project that he formed 12 years ago. He plays that style very well too (they have 2 CD's to their credit that you can find on Wayne's web site) but I'm sure glad he put down the electric for the acoustic guitar and teamed up with Roly to do "Tangled Roots". There's some great chemistry between these two on this album.

Roly has played with many great Canadian artists over his 30 year career including Ronnie Hawkins, Dutch Mason and Suzie Vinnick as well as appearing on hundreds of commercials, TV, films and other artists' albums. Over that time he has developed a unique melodic style on the diatonic harmonica that just seems to "fit" beautifully with whoever he plays with. It certainly does on this album with Wayne.

There are 11 songs on "Tangled Roots" of which 6 are originals - all studio recorded but most are done live-off-the-floor on a single take to give the album a "Live" feel. My favourites include:

- "As Blues As Blues Can Get" - a delicious, slow, swing style tune with some classic lyrics, excellent vocals by Wayne and Roly's train whistle harp soaring in the background that is, well, as Blues as Blues can get.
- "Deep Within These Lonesome Blues" - (one of Wayne's originals) - more of that great toe-tapping swing style that permeates this album, more good lyrics, some nice acoustic runs by Wayne and lovely harmonica counterpoint by Roly. Jon and Dennis on drums and bass add nice background.
- "AA Boghee" - a peppy, upbeat instrumental with all 4 artists contributing that really showcases Roly's virtuosity on the harp

Personally I was surprised that these two weren't nominated for Acoustic Act of the Year for this year's Maple Blues Awards. Our American cousins picked up on this album quickly - it made the Second Round for Best Self Produced CD of the Year (the only Canadian among the 22 who did) for the 2011 International Blues Competition Awards - winner to be announced February 5th in Memphis. Good luck boys! Win or lose however you have, in my opinion, produced a First Class acoustic Blues album that stands with the best in this or any other country! Hope there's more to come.