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THE TROUBS: reCOVERY Room 9
Independent



Cover tunes are always a mixed bag depending on the tastes and skills of the performers. Walk Off The Earth's recent viral explosion with their cover of Goyte's "Someone I Don't Know" was nearly identical to the original, except all five band members did a stunt performing of the song on a single guitar in situ. With famous profile acts the results are, traditionally, extremely predictable. Rod Stewart doing "Heard It Through The Grapevine" and "Let's Get It On" elicits an immediate yawn; Eric Clapton lighting into Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson? Qu'elle surprise. With The Troubs, a duo that stars long-standing guitar virtuosos Dave Dunlop and Rik Emmett (Triumph), the stakes are high and expectations higher. When I heard about such a project I had no doubt that these two could pull off some incredible playing but the lynch pin was going to be the song selection and their execution. "reCOVERY room 9" delivers on all fronts. What the two gents have done is chosen songs that are not, generally recognized for their guitar content with the exception of The Police's "Message In A Bottle" and Don Henley's "Boys of Summer". The duo added its own mark to these songs and filled in the gaps where percussion (the former) and keyboards (the latter) once occupied the arrangements. While songs like "I Hear You Knockin'" and "Born to Run" were initially guitar based, The Troubs double the flavour. The bump and grind of "I Hear You Knockin'" gets a new coat of paint as a more bluesy offering and "Born to Run" chugs along briskly without being bogged down in the E-Street Band's histrionics from the original. There's a nifty reading of "Superstition" blending the gritty Stevie Wonder vocal performance with Stevie Ray Vaughn's guitar arrangement that's refreshing, considering the pedestrian beating the song still gets from karaoke singers and basement bands around the world. A daring move is the all-guitar driven piano ballad "Always a Woman" by Billy Joel, which could have easily fallen into singer-songwriter Open Mic territory. Instead, the song is given full scrutiny and only suffers with a weird vocal turn in the choruses. Even more daring is the nearly satirical rendering of The Beatles' "I've Just Seen a Face" which appears to have been hi-jacked by Southern parody band Hayseed Dixie. Emmett and Dunlop can barely string the lyrics together as you wait for the song to go off the rails. They manage to hold it together long enough for the listener to say "WTF?" The jewels of this CD are the final two tracks. There is a beautifully recreated version of John Hiatt's "Have a Little Faith in Me". Where Hiatt's rasp always gave the plaintive lyrics gloomy gravitas, the soaring harmonies of Emmett and Dunlop make this a song of hope and redemption.

The Troubs stop taking it all so seriously on the last song of the disc. Hearing a straight-laced politico like Bruce Cockburn turn Monty Python's "Bright Side of Life" into a black comedy jaunt at concerts is nothing compared to The Troubs' spit-take on Monty Python's "The Galaxy Song" from their film 'The Meaning of Life'. Some may not believe it, but this near-Vaudevillian version has a little more satirical zing than Eric Idle's flowery orchestrated version. If you're going to buy any cover albums this year, I suggest "reCOVERY room 9" if for the final tracks alone. Here's hoping there will be a volume 2.

Send your CDs w/bios to: Jaimie Vernon, 180 Station Street, Suite 53, Ajax, ON L1S 1R9

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Lawrie Ingles
Weill they certainly picked a whole bunch of my favourite songs.....and songs I've covered from time to time. They are outstanding live....just sayin!
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