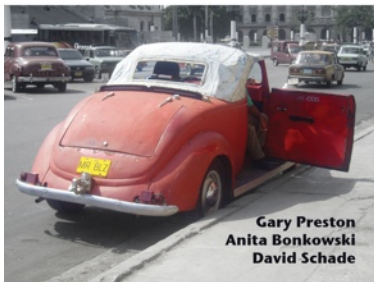


CD Reviews - "Riding With Mr. Blues" by The KingmiXers

The KingmiXers Riding With Mr. Blues



John Vermilyea (Blues Underground Network) - "Seriously good music"

Hot off the heels of two exceptional albums as a Duo, Gary Preston & Anita Bonkowski, have now joined forces with Guitarist and Vocalist David Schade, forming The KingmiXers, and offering up their great Debut release, "Riding With Mr. Blues".

The KingmiXers, a group of Canadian performers, bring a great mix of Blues and Jazz to the table, as well as, other styles including Jump and Swing Blues, Latin, and even something they call Train Rhythms.

"Riding With Mr. Blues" consists of thirteen Tracks, twelve Originals and one Cover. Gary Preston solely wrote six of the Originals, with David Schade writing three. Gary Preston also co-wrote two Tracks and Anita Bonkowski also wrote one of the Tracks. The one Cover on "Riding With Mr. Blues", was one of Ray Charles called "What'd I Say".

"Riding With Mr. Blues" is one of those nice rare albums in which you really don't know what is around the next corner, something that thoroughly surprised me, especially when I heard the Ray Charles Cover, "What'd I Say", as I had not yet viewed the Tracklist info. Another nice treat among many on this album was Track 2, "Southern Train" with it's great opening Harmonica from Gary Preston, and the way he kept the Harp going throughout. Great Track...

Having just a trio of performers on "Riding With Mr. Blues", one really got a truly intimate feeling with all aspects of the music and singing coming through loud and clear, whether it be Gary's Harmonica, Piano, and Keys playing, Anita faithfully holding the beat on Bass, Drums, and even Piano, and David's super sweet Guitar work. Mix that in with Gary's and David's great Vocals and you have got yourself a sweet way to spend the better part of a nearly an hour.

My first intro to Gary Preston & Anita Bonkowski came by way of their 2005 release "Satisfy Somebody", for which the following quote comes from my review of that album, "Satisfy Somebody is a wonderful mixture of songs... Gary and Anita meld their talents together as they magically compliment each other... I give "Satisfy Somebody" my highest rating of ***** Stars." Now as a trio with David Schade, I am equally impressed with "Riding With Mr. Blues" and I am also very pleased to give it my highest rating of 5***** as well.

Seriously good music... Jazzy Blues and much more, at it's very very best...
<http://www.bluesundergroundnetwork.com/>

Geoff Pegler, BluesBeat Radio, Australia - "Wow, this is some CD!"

"Wow, this is some CD! I listen to a lot of CDs in the course of selecting material for my program, I've got to tell you this is one of the best I've listened to in a very long time. I have marked every track for airplay most of them 4 star on my rating system (1-4 stars). I look forward to playing your CD on BluesBeat for many weeks to come."

Ben Boulanger / Radio ARA - Luxembourg

I listened to 'Riding with Mr. Blues', and I have to say: REALLY GOOD !!!

I'll play ... these tunes on my radio show **Juke Joint**, ..., and I will do this with great pleasure !

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Marcie, Rootstime

In 2005, the Canadian duo Gary Preston and Anita Bonkowski produced their first joint album 'Satisfy Somebody', followed by 'Bright Lights'. Now, with guitarist David Schade, the trio 'The KingmiXers' play a fine mix of traditional Chicago blues, boogie and swing/jump.

Singer Gary Preston plays harmonica as an artist who never exaggerates but subtly hits all the nuances. You hear the cozy ride of the 'Southern Train' or the city grind of 'Granny's At The Wheel' - Granny is out there unaware that traffic threatens all around. Multi-instrumentalist Anita Bonkowski accompanies on double bass, drums, and at times, with piano. Newcomer David Schade tops it all off with elegant and fluent guitar playing. When not studying the stars, he entwines dreams between his guitar strings. (David is an astrophysicist by day, but West Coast blues is equally magic for him.

Gary Preston and Anita Bonkowski ... have been on many festival stages both in America and in Europe. During their many tours in Belgium, they have wowed crowds with their song 'Belgian Beer Boogie', written by Preston, in which both the Karmeliet is touted as well as the lighter Jupiler. Gary, Anita, and David Schade wrote all the songs with the exception of Ray Charles' 'What'd I Say' with its New Orleans-like groove. On the title track, sung narrative and jazzy, Gary seems to refer to his complex relationship with the blues music. His voice color leans towards fifties jazz with a personal touch given to the songs.

The two instrumentals hit a more jazzy mood, as with the playful 'Jump The Q' with a sublime solo bass break, and the pleasant 'Creepin' that would not be out of place in a film of 'The Pink Panther' or Jacques Tati. The up-beat 'Feel Like Loving' and 'Gotta Good Woman' set your feet to dancing and the final track 'Living Easy' has a Gospel feeling. Bassist Bonkowski let the songs swing while guitarist David Schade lets you dream away.

The album places himself in that list of laid-back blues jazz in which Mose Allison, Duke Robillard and Junior Wells belong. The 'KingmiXers' are natural talents, and 'Riding with Mr. Blues' is a great ride down the blues highway. Their combination of harmonica blues and swing jazz invites relistening.

Philip Verhaege, Keys and Chords, Belgium

The KingmiXers are an upbeat trio with a variety of blues. Gary Preston (harmonica, piano, keyboards, vocals), Anita Bonkowski (bass, drums, piano) and David Schade (guitar, vocals) serve a delicious mix of blues, boogie and swing jazz. Preston began to make music in Toronto and shared the stage with Eric Burdon, James Cotton, Lee Oskar, Colin James, Ray Charles, Otis Rush, John Hammond and blues master Junior Wells. His latest project is The KingmiXers. Preston & Bonkowski had a first release in 2006 with 'Satisfy Somebody' and two years later with 'Bright Lights'. Now, with the collaboration of David Schade, the sound here is a cross-pollination between West Coast influenced blues licks and jazzy standards. On the opening track, the groove kicks right in, and the strong bass lines and harp energy does the rest. The classic train runs on harmonica immediately give a swinging boogie to the uplifting 'Southern Train'. Jazzy licks greet the blues sound in 'Sittin' On My Porch', just as in the amazing 'Jump The Q'.

The title track is storytelling on piano and in 'Die Tryin' the music give a nod to Chicago-style blues. The classic 'What'd I Say' is a swinging tribute to Ray Charles. And the instrumental 'Creepin' and rocking Elvis Presley-like 'Feel Like Loving' are absolute highlights. That Belgian beers are world famous, The KingmiXers apparently know only too well - what else can you make of 'Belgian Beer Boogie'. A Boogie-Woogie with a perfect foam collar, double or triple draught, I can already taste it. The harmonica is central to all songs, this album is a must for the harp lover.

'Riding With Mr. Blues' is original harmonica blues with a little hint of jazzy standards. And which blues band promotes our famous Belgian Beers? Right, The KingmiXers.

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Leonid Auskern, Jazz-Quadrat, Belarus

Gary Preston and Anita Bonkowski, members of the The KingmiXers trio, are prominent figures in the blues scene of the West Coast of Canada. They live in Victoria, the capital of the province of British Columbia, and have long played the blues, achieving fame both at the national level as well as outside of Canada.

The KingmiXers is not the only project of these musicians. Besides The KingmiXers trio, with third member, guitarist David Schade, there is the duo of Preston & Bonkowski, as well as the Gary Preston Band. But, regardless of the format of the team, the basis for their work is the blues.

Judging by the album *Riding With Mr. Blues*, the musicians do not stick to any single, narrow stylistic direction. You can hear echoes of Chicago blues, Delta blues and jump blues, and, not least, blues-rock. If a person is not very familiar with the blues in general, *Riding With Mr. Blues* can be a good illustration of how diverse this wonderful music can be, especially if it is masterfully played.

The frontman of the trio, Gary Preston on cool harp and vocals, is the author of most of the album's songs. When Preston is fronting the band, it's always interesting. Just remember the names of famous blues harp players - from Cotton to Musselwhite. And although the name Preston is not as widely known, his skill should be deeply respected. Listen to how effectively he evokes a train in the song 'Southern Train' to appreciate his technical playing. Guitarist Schade often takes a back seat to Preston, but in some compositions, especially his own compositions (e.g. Creepin'), his soft, ingratiating style of play is very impressive. Well, on a separate note, let me say something about Anita Bonkowski. There are plenty of female pianists in jazz and blues, fewer female bassists, and as for drummers - this is a rarity. But when you hear Anita play all of these instruments, as the principal rhythmic engine of the trio, I just want to take my hat off. She also contributed one of her compositions to the album - 'Jump The Q'.

My overall impression of the album by The KingmiXers trio - this is well executed modern blues. This disc is not one that should be pushed to the back shelves after listening. *Riding With Mr. Blues* is a disc that one would want to listen to again and again.

The KingmiXers

