

JAMES ARMSTRONG: Guitar Angels

Catfood CFR20 (45:28)

Grandma's Got A New Friend/ Healing Time/ Take It To The Limit/ Guitar Angels/ Moving To Nashville/ Goodbye Kiss/ Bank Of Love/ Saturday Night Women/ Blues Ain't Nothin'/ Runaway Train/ Guitar Angels (radio version)

This is James Armstrong's sophomore release on Catfood Records, the follow-up to his acclaimed label debut, 'Blues At The Border'. 'This new CD bears the stamp of James Armstrong throughout, along with the assistance of producer Michael Ross, states Catfood Records head Bob Trenchard. 'Various musicians were used in the making of the album and it was recorded at three different studios'. 'Guitar Angels' comprises nine original songs, and two covers (The Eagles hit, 'Take It To The Limit', and the Johnny Copeland composition, 'Blues Ain't Nothin'").

Opener is the humorous 'Grandma's Got A New Friend', a sly tale of a relationship that spans the years: 'he treats her right, he makes her smile; she makes him happy geriatric style'. 'Healing Time' is an affecting accolade dealing with the loss of a brother (in this case the brother of album producer Michael Ross – he co-wrote the song with Armstrong). The aforementioned "Take It To The Limit' is accorded a bluesy shuffle treatment, not a number I would have chosen for a blues set, but it really works.

Since the home invasion attack he suffered in 1996, which left Armstrong with permanent damage to his left hand, he attributes his ability to play the guitar again to his 'guitar angels', the title track is a tribute to those friends and musicians which got him through. 'Moving To Nashville' has a contemporary feel with one of those ear grabbing guitar lines that never lets up. 'Goodbye Kiss' is a lovely soul-tinged slowie, 'Bank Of Love' is another humorous number, a clever tale of meeting the girl of his dreams at the teller's window: 'here's my deposit!'. 'Saturday Night Woman' is a slyly churning shuffle, on a familiar subject, we've all seen the ladies with the war paint on out on the razzle on a Saturday night!! 'Blues Ain't Nothin'' is another mid-pacer, that old familiar theme of male-female relationships is given a clever spin by writer Johnny Copeland. 'Runaway Train' had me looking at the notes, I thought it was a Robert Cray number, but I was wrong, it's an Armstrong original, but very much in the Cray style. Finally 'Guitar Angels' is given another spin; this time it's a 'radio edit'.

I am very impressed with this set, there is not a weak track anywhere. If you have enjoyed Armstrong's previous offerings then you will need to get this one, I don't think you'll be disappointed. A big five stars from this reviewer.

I am very impressed with this set, there is not a weak track anywhere. If you have enjoyed Armstrong's previous offerings then you will need to get this one, I don't think you'll be disappointed. A big five stars from this reviewer.

Phil Wight

