

BLUES NEWS REVIEW: DVD "EMOTION"

Door Mike Garner, Blues News, 17 december 2007

Dutchman Ralph de Jongh plays acoustic and semi-acoustic guitars on this solo DVD outing. Finger style guitar, often played through a guitar amp with delay (or added in the mix) often gives the instruments an ethereal, big sound.

The songs are, as the title suggests, passionate and emotional, moody. The same mood is present in many of them, many have similar tempos. This mood is broken only when we get to the 4th cut, "Sympathy For The Devil". Starting with a plectrum-sliding-down-the-strings intro, this rendition of the Stones' anthem captures a more driving rhythm. It's at this point, too, that you realise just what it is that is familiar about de Jongh's voice. He has some of the same vocal characteristics and phrasing as Mick Jagger. Two cuts on, and there is the similarity again, another strummed power song, on acoustic, "this is the dance for you baby" sings de Jongh and I start imagining him on a big stage with a full band - what a performance that would be!

"Low Defile" returns to that sombre, soulful mood. It's a beautiful song. "My Friend", is again soulful with powerful vocals. On this, though, he intriguingly wears a slide but doesn't seem to use it? On "Don't You Forget" he uses his Klompen (traditional wooden clogs) on a board to create some rhythm accompaniment, too. The last cut, "We Used" has de Jongh, for some reason, off his chair and half lying on the floor at the start of the song which he completes on his knees! This song has some bluesy licks and some attractive playing, though.

The DVD 'extra' consists of a long interview with de Jongh and he is asked about his influences. The Rolling Stones, particularly Keith Richards' guitar playing and singing, was a strong influence, hence the Stones feel, but interestingly the Jagger vocalisation style seems to have won over de Jongh! He also names Muddy Waters and Son House, amongst others as influences. Indeed, the DVD slick says "we dream back to the time of pre-war blues ...". Now I don't hear much of that on the playing on this DVD. Of course, it's there in the background of the Stones, Led Zep and all the other influences on this shy young Dutchman. He played in blues bands in Holland so maybe blues featured more in his live band sets. His web site also signals another new audio CD, Live At The Saint Izaire Blues Festival, which has some of the original songs on this DVD but there are also covers of Elmore James, Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson and Son House. He is a man of two muses.

This DVD focuses specifically on de Jongh's own compositions, The DVD is aptly titled. These are for the most part intense and personal, original songs delivered by a talented young player. In a word 'Emotion'.