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Mad Dog Blues “Live Love”

**2021 Self Released Reviewed
by Jack Grace**

Mad Dog Blues is one of our own - a Colorado band steeped in country blues but expanding that genre to express its own eclectic approach to Colorado music. Live Love is the band's third recording in ten months: Family Reunion 2020, Hug with Our Heart, and now Live Love. That's a lot of music in a short time and each CD explores a new musical direction.



Live Love is a full length digital album recorded live at the Wibby Brewing Company in Longmont. It represents Mad Dog Blues' experimentation with acoustic jam band blues. There are four extended jams on the recording totalling some 47 minutes of music. Three of the four songs were written, or co-written, by Mad Dog Friedman. The fourth is a cover of "Get Up Stand Up" written by Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. The musicians are: Mad Dog Friedman, harmonica; Jeff Becker, mandolin; Clark Chanslor, stand up bass; and Sean Bennight, Mark Kaczorowski, and Big Willy Palmer on acoustic guitars.

The CD opens with "Never Lost Love." Intros to all four songs begin with an acoustic guitar laying down the rhythmic base in chords or riffs and then adding mandolin. The band takes off from there. Jeff Becker contributes some impressive mandolin. Sometimes his playing is so subtle it tickles. Other times he fills out the middle and then launches into long bouncing lines - always adding flavor. Friedman keeps his harmonica softly pulsating in the background before trading licks with Becker. Some nice lead guitar runs follow. All in all, the band is pretty tight on this selection.

Next up is "Mojo Queen." To me, this one sounds a little Ry Cooder-ish sans slide guitar because of the way the rhythms weave together. Mad Dog's harmonica sometimes flicks like a snake's tongue. Listen for it. It's tempting for the players in a jam band to jump in all at once - kind of like someone says, "let's all play lead." Sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn't but the band pulls it off pretty well in this song.

"Get Up Stand Up" follows. As expected, this is the strongest song lyrically and melodically. Who can top Bob Marley for a message and reggae groove? Although one normally does not think of a mandolin in a reggae song, Becker's mandolin adds a lot of strength to the song. There are also some very cool lead guitar lines running throughout.

The last song is "Shine." Mad Dog introduces it as a hill country song. One usually associates hill country music with a captivating one or two chord groove. We have that here. Everyone gets a chance to shine on their instrument. At times, Mad Dog's harmonica sounds like it is coming from something in the wetlands - eerie but compelling. Chanslor has a bass solo but it gets a little lost in the mix. Bass is important in keeping a jam together and I would have liked to hear it more clearly in this recording. There are some really interesting lead guitar lines with complex but perfect timing.