

MAVERICK

CD REVIEWS - THE NEW RELEASES

Amy Black ONE TIME

Reuben Records

★★★★

Lively blues, country and folk rhythms permeate Black's thoroughly enjoyable solo debut

Black's first recording was a late 2009 self-titled set credited to Amy Black & the Red Clay Rascals. With ONE TIME, produced by guitarist/percussionist Lorne Entress (Lori McKenna, Mark Erelli), she steps out on her own. Recorded in a handful of, mainly, New England studios, nine of the twelve compositions were penned by Amy, mid-album there's a rendition of Loretta Lynn's *You Ain't Woman Enough (To Take My Man)* and this collection closes with a sympathetic five-minute plus rendition of Kris Delmhurst's *Words Fail You* followed by an arrangement of Claude Ely's *Ain't No Grave (Gonna Hold My Body Down)*. Inside the rear page of the liner booklet there's a dedication to Thomas Reuben James (1921-2010), Black's beloved (maternal?) Alabama bred grandfather—in that regard, note the name of Amy's record label.

Amy grew up in Missouri and Alabama, where her father was a preacher, and the Black family settled in Boston when she was sixteen. On ONE TIME, Black is supported by Red Clay Rascals alumni Bob Sevigny (guitar), Andy Sicard (upright bass) and Eric Pohl (percussion). Corrie Jones, Amy's younger sister also a Rascal, adds her voice to a couple of songs. Also adding their skills to the final mix are local guitarists Tim Gearan, Lyle Brewer and Mark Erelli, plus Roger Williams (Dobro) and Jesse Williams (bass), while Stuart Duncan (fiddle, mandolin) added his contributions at Compass Records studio in Nashville.

In the latter days of Jim Rooney's tenure as manager of Club 47, the forerunner of today's Boston, Cambridge folk haven Club Passim, one of the regularly featured performers was young Bonnie Raitt. Considering Amy's Southern upbringing it's no surprise that one of her influences is the blues, and album opener *Run Johnny* is moulded in the murder ballad tradition while Black, vocally, sounds like a young Raitt—there's even mention in the opening verse that Johnny 'Better get outta Alabama.' Next up, is the similarly blues-tinged album title song, and it's only slightly less sonically rambunctious. Erelli adds his voice to the love song *Whiskey And Wine*, and he's also heard on the hook-laden country tune *Meet Me On The Dancefloor* and the gospel-flavoured *Ain't No Grave*. Black changes gear to western-swing for *Stay*, and adopts an acoustic folk approach with bluegrass mandolin and Dobro flourishes on *Molly*—the tale of an ageing millworker. A discernible retro-roots feel permeates this album and that's no bad thing. **Arthur Wood**

<http://amyblack.com/>



The Band Of Heathens TOP HAT CROWN & THE CLAPMASTER'S SON

Blue Rose Records-BLUDP0540

★★★★★

Latest release from one of the best bands on the Americana circuit

The Band Of Heathens seem to be going from strength to strength as they have fine-tuned and tweaked their already near impeccable sound. In addition their three lead singers and main songwriters—Ed Jurdi, Gordy Quist and Colin Brooks are writing some incredibly good songs. This latest CD opens with a great beat from drummer John Chipman with rhythmic bass guitar supplied by the excellent Seth Whitney adding perfect foundation to the soul/blues styled *Medicine Man* which also has some great resonator guitar from Brooks.

All three singers have tremendous voices, whilst also bringing different styles to the BOH sound mix. *Enough* is swampy blues of the highest quality as it broods and simmers, then *Polaroid* is a complete opposite as it is more country with tap-along melody and brighter vocals. *The Other Broadway* is a spine-tingling soul styled ballad with some of the best vocals you will ever wish to hear, BOH are also helped out by a great horn section in the form of the Mad Horny Toad Horns—this is the Band Of Heathens at their strongest. *I Ain't Running* pushes towards funk and *Free Again* is another upbeat track that encapsulates the band's sound so well and should be a popular song at their gigs. *Gris Gris Satchel* is a wonderfully smooth country-folk track showing off their tremendous harmonies.

The Band Of Heathens are five tremendously talented musicians making them one of the best and tightest Americana bands out there. Try and catch them in concert if you can and also treat yourselves to this brilliant CD. **David Knowles**

www.bandofheathens.com



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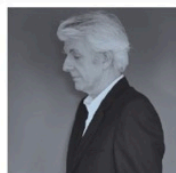
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