

BLUES REVUE

THE WORLD'S BLUES MAGAZINE

ISSUE #133 MARCH/APRIL 2012

DVD ROUNDUP

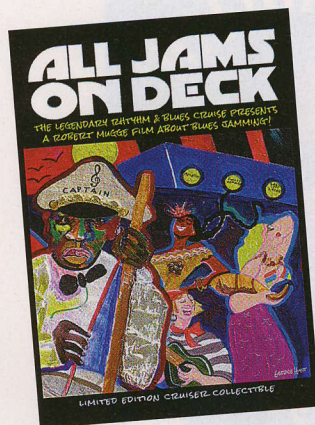
ALL JAMS ON DECK

A Robert Muge Film

"There's time when you lay in the groove and there's times when it builds. Unpredictability for the musician is the most desired thing." – Kim Wilson

Imagine a tiny juke joint set in a Delta cotton field with two field hands creating the blues or a crowded tavern on Chicago's Southside where harmonica players pass the Marine Band from one to another or an after hours experience at any blues club or festival around the world where a variety of musicians lock into the groove. Now put it on a cruise ship at sea with the musicians from over 40 all star blues bands and you have some idea of the magic that happens every night aboard Roger Nabor's *Legendary Rhythm & Blues Cruise*.

This DVD compiles over 90 minutes of on-stage fireworks from the October, 2010 cruise. What you get are two jam segments from Tommy Castro, Coco Montoya, Kim



Wilson, and two outrageous piano headcuttings. Sprinkled in-between are singular jam offerings by Johnny Winter, the Lowriders (think War), Marcia Ball, Elvin Bishop, and a back porch styled acoustic pairing between Mississippi's Vasti Jackson and Ann Arbor's Laith al-Saadi.

Spliced between these all hands on deck jams are intimate talks with many of the musicians on the boat. The discussions with musicians like Castro, Bishop, Wilson, Lee Oskar, Montoya, Jimmy Thackery, Larry McCray, Jackson, Ball, Rev. Billy Wirtz, Commander Cody, and others should be required listening for every aspiring musician, blues or otherwise, to understand the purpose and etiquette of jamming. It is not to stand on stage and shred, rather, as every filmed jam shows, it is about creating a one of a kind musical art of the moment, never to be recreated again.

On these cruises, it's the nightly Pro jams that have become legendary. Where else can nine horns, three guitars, two harmonicas, and two percussionists playing six congas sound heavenly? Tommy Castro hosts the first two jam sessions. On the second, there are no fewer than 12 musicians on stage including a five-man horn section with two trombones. Watch how they listen as Tom Poole explains the on the fly arrangements and the horns follow. Johnny Winter adds his brother Edgar and Elvin Bishop on the slow blues masterpiece, "Johnny's Jam." Montoya, Jackson, and Kid Andersen ignite indoor fireworks backed by an awesome horn arrangement. Kim Wilson's jams feature an all-star collection of Bishop, Montoya, Nemeth,

Oskar, and the ever-present horns. You know it's heavenly when Marcia Ball ends her horn driven, 12 people on-stage jam by declaring, "That's the way I hear it in my dreams."

The historical perspectives from Bob Porter and Bill Wax recall the storied days of piano and sax battles that were important elements in the growth of this American music. Many of us have also heard the stories from Chicago blues musicians about the legendary headcutting sessions where the winner earned himself a bottle at session's end.

This past reputation of musicians battling after hours for notoriety is today distilled into musicians creating magic. The two piano jams recall the late night head cutting sessions from the 1930s. There's an all out

piano jam which starts with four players, Cody, Leon Blue, Kelley Hunt, and Steve Willis, pounding a boogie on four pianos and then quickly adds six more hands, Ball, Eden Brent, and Wirtz, to the frenzy.

"I call it musical compatibility and musical telepathy because when you listen to your fellow musician play, you can envision right where you would fit in beside what he's doing at that particular time." – Larry McCray

If you've ever been on one of the many LRBCs, this 90 minutes of jam only will serve as a reminder of the experience. If you've never been on the blues cruise, this DVD should push you into making that experience a reality.

– Art Tipaldi