

John Primer - Blue Steel - A Tribute to Elmore James

Wolf Records, 2003

by [Tim Holek](#) Review date: May 2003

BLUES
On Stage



The highlight of any John Primer show is when he pulls out the bottleneck and uses it to vivaciously perform ripping and pumping slide guitar. On Blue Steel you can experience his enthusiastic slide for 56 minutes via 14 staple cuts which are mostly short and sweet. Appropriately, most of them are Elmore James classics but Primer sneaks in 3 of his own on the self-produced CD. After a very brief (one release) stint with Telarc, Primer returns on Wolf Records. Shaped under the pressure of backing greats like Muddy Waters and Magic Slim, Primer is a modern day traditional electric Chicago blues master. He has played with the best of them and now he is one of them. Backed by regular touring members of his Real Deal Blues Band (Bo Trisko rhythm guitar, Michael Morrison bass and Mark Diffenderffer drums), John works his listeners into a blues trance.

Many tribute discs don't work. This is one that does thanks to the genuine homage from one of today's blues experts to one of yesteryear's - both originally from Mississippi. Primer is quoted from Lisa Becker and Bo Trisko's fantastic liner notes, 'I wanted Elmore to be recognized for the incredible impact he had on all of us. a new generation will be exposed to Elmore, keeping his style alive.' Primer seems to have made a personal musical ambition to bring the older blues traditions to a wider, modern audience. Blue Steel contains authentic down home blues and magnificent slide which the larger labels avoid. Sure, some of the more common riffs are repeated once too often. However, Primer proves himself a blues slide guitar aficionado. This is old-style blues we can't afford to lose.

John Primer - "Knocking at Your Door"

Telarc (83456)

by [Matt Alcott](#) Review date: March 2000

BLUES
On Stage



The Chicago blues scene has always needed talented players like Camden, Miss. native Alfonso "John" Primer to play on everybody's albums and fill the clubs when Buddy Guy or Otis Rush is on tour someplace else. He's an excellent guitarist who played for 13 years with the Chicago fixture Magic Slim and the Teardrops-that was essentially an extension of his long gig as house guitarist at the South Side's Theresa's Lounge. He recorded his solo debut, "Stuff You Got to Watch," in 1993, which began a career of solid, credible Chicago blues with few twists or distinctive ideas. Primer's latest was recorded and mixed January 6-13, 2000 at RaxTrax Recording Company in Chicago and contains 12 tracks.

Joining Primer is the fine harmonicist Matthew Skoller, guitarist Larry McCray, pianist/organist Ken Saydak, bassist Al Brown, drummer Steve McCray and percussionist Mike Vernon.

Primer has a decent voice and his band is the proficient type that one hopes to find playing in their local club.

"Knocking at Your Door" is an excellent reward for a musician so important for so long in the Chicago blues scene.

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