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Review: Roots and Branches - Robin Trower



by Andy Snipper

I don't think I will ever understand why **Robin Trower** isn't talked about in the same hushed tones as Clapton or Beck or the Kings. Apart from the fact that he hasn't courted the press acclaim of those or pandered to the Blues/Rock brethren that believe that anyone who plays a Stevie Ray Vaughan riff is a genius he really hasn't done anything wrong.



What he has done, since the mid-sixties, is play a style of Blues guitar that is original, recognisable and absolutely trippy – this guy could have written the book on psych guitar if he had stopped playing long enough to do so.

This album – his 31st if you except live albums – sees him mixing classiccs with his own material but the treatment of the classics is all about the song and his treatment – no copying of anyone elses style or repeating the classic lines. Hear his version of *Little Red Rooster*; everyone knows the Stones version and there oughtn't be too many who don't know the Willie Dixon/Howling Wolf original but he takes the song and adds a relaxed positivity to it that takes out the brashness of Jagger or the tweeness of Carla Thomas and gives you a song that is new and completely familiar at the same time.

Or take a listen to *That's Alright Mama* – Elvis and Big Mama Thornton laid down the classic versions and Arthur Crudup (Big Boy) wrote it and released the first version back in 1946. This version is a stone killer with a blasting riff and brilliantly funky tones.

He also covers Leiber & Stoller's *Hound Dog* and takes it much closer to Big Mama Thornton's blast than Elvis's (great harmonica from Paul Jones).

His original songs fit in well alongside the classics and there isn't any obvious gap in quality – he has been at it long enough to be able to apply his sound to these songs and the result if pure Trower.

There aren't many around today who can take a Strat and make music that doesn't sound derivative or slavish – Robin Trower is one of the best.

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