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Lance Lopez – “Handmade Music” Album Review



Lance Lopez – “Handmade Music”

“Lance Lopez makes his push for the Blues-Rock title”

by Tango Sho’Nuff

Being a guitarist in the Lone Star State has its Pros and Cons. Texas is known for its fair share of guitar legends, historic venues, and thriving music scene. Like it or not, if you want to be part of that scene, you best be prepared to be compared to the likes of SRV and dozens of other world class axe slingers. Lance Lopez has been a part of this scene for over a decade, he’s paid his dues in full, fought through career/personal set backs, and won the praises of legends like Billy Gibbons, Jeff Beck, Steve Vai, BB King, [Johnny Winter](#), and countless others. After touring all across Europe and the US in 2011, he found time to bunker down at legendary Ardent Studios in TN and with the help of producer -extraordinaire Jim Gaines, crafted the stellar “Handmade Music”

“Handmade Music” is probably the most concise, consistent release of Lopez’s [career](#), and sonically one of the best ‘sounding’ Blues-Rock releases I’ve heard in recent memory. In a nutshell, Lopez is finding that elusive middle ground where his material is strong enough to catch your ear while still maintaining the incendiary six string fireworks that guitar geeks crave. Most importantly, the album FEELS like an album, with a nice mix of tempos, styles, and tones. In fact, the guitar tones are one of the highlights throughout the entire album. “Tone” is another Texas tradition and Lopez holds his own against any and all players, Texas-bred or not.

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Some of the standouts among the album's 12 tracks are a couple of driving, groove-heavy rockers – “HARD TIME” couples a simply infectious groove of a riff with a rich, harmonic yet punchy tone that would make even Rev. Willy envious – while Lopez’s version of the Don Nix/Beck-Bogart-Appice classic “BLACK CAT MOAN” keeps the spirit of the original while adding elephant-sized grooves smothered in a blanket of fuzz. Equally groovy is Lance’s take on the Robert Johnson standard “TRAVELING RIVERSIDE BLUES” – where Johnson’s was a [Delta blues](#) slide-fest, Lance injects some serious firepower to the arrangement, foregoing the slide all together and opting for more phat ass riffs and swinging grooves.

What has helped set Lance apart from his contemporaries is his versatility, while “Handmade Music” is a groove heavy, riff oriented affair, Lopez is no one trick pony. Of course you get a handful of Texas Shuffles – “COME BACK HOME” (which has an absolutely burning-churning solo section) and a stellar cover of Johnny Winter’s “CAN’T YOU FEEL IT”. “LOWDOWN WAYS” is the sole slow-burn blues on the record, with a nice contrast of laid back feel with Winter-esque fluid phrasing in the lead work. “LET GO” shows Lance’s more melodic side with great vocals and tasty lead licks throughout showing impressive restraint from a guy with chops to spare.

“LETTERS” is probably the most fun track on tap, with great storyline lyrics tied into a catchy chorus, but at 2:00 in...the track gets downright funky as hell with Lopez unleashing a hellish wah-wah workout that flows seamlessly back into the verse (the outro gets even funkier, harkening to Lance’s Funk-Heavy 2006 release “Simplify Your Vision”). “DREAM AWAY” is a near 7:00 epic track with a brilliantly simple arrangement that lets the soulful vocals carry you effortlessly through a tale of past pain and regret (with the solo being exceptionally expressive: again displaying touch over technique). Lance also treats us to a fine instrumental track with “VAYA CON DIOS” which again forgoes flash for substance, opting to get his point across with serene melodies and gut bucket bends rather than pointless scalar runs.

Overall, Lance Lopez has put together a damn fine album that stands out among his already stellar back catalog. Some people don’t realize that this cat has been a professional musician since his pre-teens and has honed his craft relentlessly while building a strong fan base the old fashion way. With the right team of people behind him, Lance is poised to finally breakthrough to a much wider audience.

When it comes down to it, in the Blues Rock genre – Lopez is the total package. With a Texas-sized tone that rivals giants like Eric Johnson, Billy Gibbons and Andy Timmons, blinding speed and technique that I don’t think any of his peers can match, and solid material and songs that have the crossover appeal of Bonamassa and KWS...Lance also has that elusive X-factor that many fine players seem to lack, and that is wearing his influences on his sleeve but never resorting to a carbon copy clone of another player’s style. Granted, on his earlier discs he went through his Hendrix and SRV phases respectively, but with a decade+ of experience behind him, he has developed a sound and style truly his own. Only a true great can possess Lance’s ungodly chops yet be smart enough to pick and choose when to burn and when to hold back.

Lance Lopez is the REAL DEAL, and “HANDMADE MUSIC” is one seriously impressive record -

8/10 stars

TRACK LISTING:

- 1 – Come Back Home
- 2 – Hard Time
- 3 – Let Go

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- 4 – Dream Away
- 5 – Get Out and Walk
- 6 – Your Love
- 7 – Traveling Riverside Blues
- 8 – Letters
- 9 – Vaya Con Dios
- 10- Black Cat Moan
- 11- Can You Feel It
- 12- Lowdown Ways

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