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Album Review					

JD MALONE & THE EXPERTS

Avalon



I guess this is what they call Classic Rock these days--- straight on rock, beat and melody dominating, vocals upfront and the occasional touches of Americana, the catch-all genre writers use when they hear any semblance of acoustic that isn't locked down. I

can see it. Hell, I can *hear* it. Bands like **REO** and **The Michael Stanley Band** and, yes, **Foghat** (in their quieter moments--- but more American) lived off of riffs like **JD Malone & The Experts** crank out. Good riffs. Solid riffs. Catchy riffs. If you don't think so, you need to watch the video of the band's *She Likes*, live (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuRiGBEzop0>). Nothing flashy. Nothing over the top. Just solid rock and just enough punch to make you feel good. Isn't that what rock used to be? Music that made you feel good? It still does. You just have to look for it these days.

You get it in spades in this CD/DVD package put together by Dean Sciarra, head honcho at It's About Music dot com (www.itsaboutmusic.com) Not only is it a class package (three-fold, slots for a CD, a DVD and a classy booklet which gives in-detail info about the band members and their individual paths to *Avalon* as well as easy to read lyrics (no large print, but at least it is not black on dark brown nor is it white on bright yellow). You don't care about those things? Most of us who grew up with albums do. Makes me wonder what kids do when they listen to music today. We read *liner notes*! That's why we know so damn much!

As for **JD Malone & The Experts**, there are bound to be comparisons. Sciarra himself mentions Mellencamp, Springsteen, Petty and Creedence. He also tosses a younger Steve Earle in for good measure. Is he right? Well, let's put it this way. He's not wrong. My first time through, I suppose I did hear a bit of those heavyweights. I also heard a touch of **Richard Torrance** and (I can't believe I'm saying this) early

Jimmy Buffett and a whole slew of others. I guess they call it classic rock for a reason, eh? Mostly, though, I hear a super-competent easy-glide **JD Malone & The Experts**. They have their own groove, their own feel, and at times it as if they don't even have to try, they have it down so well. Again, check out the Youtube video link above. Watch the band. I watch that and I think, hell, *I* can do that knowing the whole time that I couldn't. That's the point. These guys make you *think* you can. They make it look easy. It isn't.


You get one hell of a lot in this package. One CD: check. Filled with thirteen regular studio tracks, one bonus track (a radio edit of *Just Like New*) and four audio tracks from the *Live* DVD. One DVD: check. Seven tracks filmed and recorded in the studio, the Experts laying it down like the pros they are. Booklet: check. Filled with a statement from Sciarra, who explains how the project came about; the track records of the musicians involved; and the lyrics. Are the lyrics important? If they weren't, doubters, they wouldn't still be trying to unravel the lyrics of *Louie Louie* to see if they might not have been dirty after all.

A word about Dean Sciarra. I don't know him all that well, but have had dealings with him. He is a lot like myself in many ways. We both watched the record industry ride to the top on the backs of the musicians who put them there. We both watched musicians become stars and those stars become superstars. We cringed as the realities of the music crashed against the PR of the corporations. We watched music people tossed overboard for the yes-men and the bean counters. We both hated it. We were both in it for the *music*. When Dean started **It's About Music**, there was no doubt in my mind that it was all about the music. He gave musicians portals through which they could market and retain control of their music. He made sure they got their cut, and not just a major label cut which is pennies on the dollar, but a *fair* cut. He may not always be able to do things the way he wants (such is the way of business in this so-called "free trade" economy), but he *wants* to do it the right way. He tries. And mostly, he succeeds. Like when he slaps the "Great Music Guarantee" sticker on the CD jacket. "If you don't agree that this CD is Great (sic) – We'll take it back! Purchase this CD and get a free album download of any album from our catalog of more than 300 albums!" A free download! And listen to what they have in their catalog: **Space Opera** (three albums from Fort Worth's legends); **Nektar** (those prog-rockin' honyoks were big when I worked in records in the mid- to late-seventies); **The Buckingham**s (hey, I *loved* those guys back in the day and they're still cranking them out); **Michael Stanley** (with band and without--- one of my favorite artists, from his beginning to today); **Iain Matthews** (man, you should *see* all the Iain (Ian) Matthews albums they have--- including my all-time favorite *Valley Hi*, produced by **Michael Nesmith**); **Sand** (their first album is a stone classic--- no one has ever sounded quite like them)..... Crapola! It would take me weeks to just make up my mind!

But see? That's how cool this whole thing is. It's like a freakin' TV commercial. "But wait! If you call right now....."

What more could I possibly say? It's a hell of a deal. And it all starts with **JD Malone & The Experts**. It's guaranteed, for chrissake! I'm tired. Hocking records is hard work. I think I need a beer. After the third beer, by the way, these guys start kicking shit on those supertars I mentioned. Don't need 'em, don't care. Me, **JD Malone** and a **Dale's Pale Ale**. Life doesn't get much better than that.

Frank O. Gutch Jr.

 **28182**

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