

The Robert Cray Collection

Cherry Red PPCR 025

Steve Marriott – All Or Nothing Live In London

Cherry Red CRDVD177

These DVDs look at two artists who approach the blues from completely different perspectives – but whose understanding and appreciation of the music’s roots are based in tradition.

The “Robert Cray Collection” follows him from “Strong Persuader” through to “Midnight Stroll” – using footage from live, studio and video clips, interspersed with interview segments to give an appreciation of Cray’s musical development during this period.

Many Cray classics are featured including the deeply soulful “Smoking Gun” collated from a variety of sources but melded into one wholly impressive performance – via the classic deep soul of “Don’t Be Afraid Of The Dark” – to the funky blues of “Consequences.

Throughout Cray is accompanied by long-term stalwarts Richard cousins and Jim Pugh with help from the Memphis Horns who add real substance to Cray’s soul infused approach to his music. Just one listen to the funky brooder “The Forecast (Calls For Pain)” or the concert footage of “I Guess I showed Her” shows how important horns have been in creating Cray’s soul blues musical persona.

Several of these clips were designed to give Cray “crossover appeal” – hence the cartoon/comic strip graphics that accompany “Acting This Way”, and the “Pythonesque” graphics that form a backdrop to “Nothin’ But A Woman” – or the “lonely room” setting of the deeply soulful “Right Next Door” that gives a more personalised view of Cray as an individual.

However Cray is portrayed, his sheer talent and artistry show through on every track, making this a “must have” for his many fans worldwide.

Steve Marriott was blessed with an iconic rock voice that he exploited to it’s full on tracks like “Watcha Gonna Do About It?”, “All Or Nothing” and “Tin Soldier” – all of which are featured on this live recording of his band The Packet Of Three performing at the Camden Palace Theatre in 1985. These performances confirm why the first two tracks of the aforementioned three have become rock anthems – but crucially they also demonstrate the natural feel for the blues that runs through all of Marriott’s work.

In the “cheeky Cockney chappie” interview that precedes the concert footage, Marriott confirms his love of the music of Muddy Waters – and that shows in the compelling bluesy intro to Ashford and Simpson’s “I Don’t Need No Doctor” before he launches into a slab of blues rock of the highest order. This love of the blues is reconfirmed on a searing rendition of “Five Long Years”, where the intensity of Marriott’s singing and guitar playing conjures up a vision of a “white Buddy Guy” – whilst Rufus Thomas’s “Walking The Dog” is also given the Marriott (or should that read Guy) treatment. The straight blues aspect of this set is rounded out by Jim Leverton’s rendition of Jimmy Reed’s “Shame, Shame, Shame”.

Add in the intense “Zeppelinesque” “Fool For A Pretty Face” and “30 Days In The Whole” and you have a set that will please rock and blues fans alike.

Rating 9/9

Mick Rainsford