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**Chris Farlowe**

**Hotel Eingang**

**Review by Bruce Stringer**

Chris Farlowe's reputation as one of the leading blues singers of his generation – and one of the greatest British blues vocalists of all time – is hard earned and has obviously been no small feat to achieve. One may be mistaken for denying his ethnicity, or falling for his diminutive, humble style but this man is a giant in the world of "white boy blues." Having hit the charts with the seminal British blues number "Stormy Monday Blues" under the pseudonym Little Joe Cook, the myth that he was of African descent continued to linger until his identity was revealed as the humble, pale skinned Londoner. Over the years, Farlowe's rock works would take him through the ranks of bands such as Atomic Rooster and Colosseum and even further on, to the mystical realm of Jimmy Page's solo endeavors.

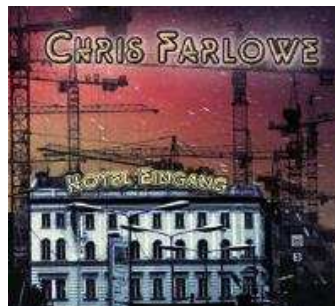
However, it is the blueprint for his blues styling that is contained within the new release, *Hotel Eingang*, a collection of (mainly) cover songs with a unique twist. The obvious impression from the first few bars of this CD is that the production is incredibly good and sounds like it has been recorded in one of the best LA studios. This impression is false, though, as the album is a British affair released through pioneering German label Inakustik and, without much ado, Farlowe manages to raise the bar yet again!

*Hotel Eingang* is a rollicking, great listen for all blues lovers. Due to its non-obtrusive manner, the CD is a fun party album that you might put on to warm guests up before the serious antics begin. Chris Farlowe's vocal power is truly unique, as can be heard on this compilation of old and new, famous and not-so-famous blues songs. There are vocal moments a la Marvin Gaye and Ray Charles alongside Barry White-esque sub-bass murmurings. The group is outstanding and the musicians obviously get the lyrical humor, as the word painting – although underplayed – is apt and well placed. All in all, this is one excellent album. To hear this CD was indeed a refreshing change to the attention seeking hype that many commercial artists are currently founded on, where substance is overshadowed by instantly forgettable style. I look forward to more from Mr. Farlowe as he ages with the grace of a true musical icon, and as he continues to set the benchmark for greatness in British blues.

#### Track by Track Review

##### Jealous Man

"Jealous Man" begins with a very retro, high-energy style of piano and guitar interplay in a way that one might imagine the Yardbirds if they had a piano player. There are elements of brass throughout, yet in a subtler manner than the more aggressive horn work in other blues outfits. Chris Farlowe's voice is broad and rounded, aged like a vat of old 99. As this is such a stylized album, there are shades of everything from Chuck Berry to Jimmy Page in Miller Anderson's guitar work and other brief musical homages plastered all over.



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### Don't Wanna Love You Anymore

This is the big production ballad of the album, allowing Farlowe to vocalize with emotion and depth of feeling. There is some really nice slide guitar and the rhythm section is crisp and full of bottom end. Due to the short length of the piece there is no stagnation or self indulgence. The mood is uplifting though the lyrics deal with the seriousness of breaking up. It's a great change in direction from the opener.

### It Should've Been Me

Returning to a classic Muddy Waters / Bo Diddley format, the big triplet beat is head-nodding fodder and seriously great fun. Farlowe's voice is distinctly different between verses and choruses illustrating the diversity of which this man is capable. The choruses deliver typical Farlowe power as he belts out the words like only he is capable of. The drums are crisp and open, with a less aggressive ride cymbal than common blues recordings. The tight and clean performance gives is a solid platform for the band to improvise in the background. Although "It Should've Been Me" could be classed in the same category as the opening number there has obviously been some well considered thought into the track listing.

### So Hard To Get Along With

It might seem, upon listening to this, that ZZ Top's "La Grange" might have been given a re-working, however the riff goes way back to the birth of electric blues. These guys tear through the speakers with a brilliantly clean sound: slide guitar over electric piano, brass accenting the focus of the chorus and excellent female backing vocals. The mix is superb and, once again, alludes to a premium-priced US production but with a uniquely British take on the whole thing. Once more, the guitar playing is noteworthy even if to simply demonstrate that Anderson's underplay is well conceived and tasteful, yet – when required – he can burst into some nicely positioned moments of intense axe wielding.

### I've Got Your Love

"I've Got Your Love" is a minimalist sounding number with organ carrying the vocals before some country style slide guitar work takes the song into a slightly Western territory. There are key changes and some nice bass playing behind the reverberated slide playing. Farlowe's grandness is felt with no uncertainty and the song delivers a cross-borders journey from the land of the blues to somewhere a little less obvious. This is definitely taken from the same template as "Don't Wanna Love You Anymore," with regards to arrangement and mood and is a pleasant version of a Boz Scaggs number.

### The Woman? Or The Blues

**"So which came first – the woman or the blues?" The lyrics are a fun twisting of the old blues concepts and they work with a tongue firmly placed in-cheek. One might be mistaken for assuming that the guitar work was a hark back to the heady 1960's when bands like the Yardbirds and Rolling Stones were pounding the pavement with head-nodding riffs. It's a great cover song for Farlowe's voice and the band sound quite tight with solid riff work and hard-edged timing to boot.**

### 9lbs Of Steel

The smooth organ eludes to a smoky barroom atmosphere as Farlowe recalls one mistake too many with thoughts of his woman as he lies behind bars in a "county jail" somewhere. There is a gospel quality in the organ playing and the cleaner blues guitar soloing is more in line with a "Deep South" sound. The guitar vibrato is full of feeling and the general arrangement is spacious and inviting.

### Baby's Arms

**Continuing with an American sounding lighter style of blues, "Baby's Arms" has a soft touch and the vocals are well suited to this, a more held back outlet of expression. The guitars are very subtle, matching the bass guitar with a little flurry every now and then. With electric piano interplay over the organ, there are some moments of subtlety that can be discovered on secondary listening to this excellent release. There is a commercial sound to the whole mix and, yes, you might actually recall this recent ditty from another great blues musician.**

### **I Only Have Love For You**

Farlowe's highs are solid and sustained – emotion can be felt pouring out in this four-to-the-floor blues soft rocker. The harmonica sounds truly great from guitarist, Miller, and the recording of the mouth harp mixes in nicely alongside the voice and other instruments. The saxophone and other brass elements are mixed quite low so as not to compete with the vocals and stomping bass and drums. A round of solos begins in the brass section later on where a friendly competition fires up. The song fades out at a point where the soloing could have gone on for a lot longer, however there seems to have been a strict shunning of the self-indulgent solo. For those with any concerns, the next song brings it all back to the straightforward nature of the blues.

### **Fog On The Highway**

This is a solid blues number and has been sequenced on the second half of the CD for good effect as it has a lazy, late night feel to it. Again, smoky bars round midnight seems to be the order of things. The guitar solo has a kind of David Gilmour nostalgic flavor and the piano playing is reminiscent of Rolling Stones keysman, Nicky Hopkins. Farlowe, who recorded this album in his 68<sup>th</sup> year, sounds as young as he ever did and his performing life span will continue on for many years thanks to a solid vocal technique and a keen, production savvy mindset. The climax to "Fog On The Highway" is classic blues allowing Farlowe to stretch those chords.

### **I'd Rather Be Lying With You**

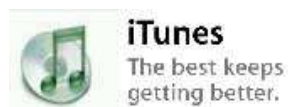
**Returning to a somber mood with an almost country temperance, the focus is on vocals with all-female support in Irene and Doreen Chanter (famous for working with Pink Floyd). The production is sparse and inspired and the musicianship is tasteful. There are moments where the interplay could have become messy but the mastership that is displayed is a breath of fresh air. As always, Farlowe's voice is commanding yet soothing.**

### **That's Why Lovers Have The Blues**

This up-tempo – almost rigid – song has a leaning to the works of Ray Charles and B. B. King, with airtight drumming and strict bass playing from Kris Gray (who also produced this album alongside Farlowe) the band sound like they are having a ball. The regimented feel is taken less seriously as the ending nears; a non-climactic stop occurs with mirth filled improvisation to fill the mix from the various players. All round good fun!

### **Hotel Eingang**

This being the title of the album, I was expecting a dose of heavy blues, an explosion of deep, soulful melodies and lashings of heartfelt vibrato. Instead, this is a spoken word story by Mr Farlowe: the humorous tale of youth gone wild in a city where miscommunication mishaps end up in a comedy of errors. Without giving away the joke, it's a great little moment of mirth from a blues man with a sense of humor and a ripping yarn for all.



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