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Son Henry Band, at the Blue Lamp, Aberde

A Son Henry gig is a taste of Texas, a little bit of Alaska. Solo, he plays a with an acute feel for the rhythms and anger of the delta, in turns subtle and ferocious, hollering and stomping in time with the eerie call of the bottleneck, on the strings of his beat-up '32 National. How does this translate to a three-piece electric band? It's a totally different, yet still completely authentic vibe: Roadhouse USA, coming to a town near you.

This is not a showcase for the next virtuoso wannabe; Son, Les Taylor and Mike Oxley are all business- a tight, accomplished, unassuming collective, dedicated to finding your particular blues itch- and scratching it. The set list is.....open to alteration! You like Chicago? How much and how old? Country blues? How stripped, how far south do you go? Maybe Rory or EC are more your thing? No problem, just a few seconds to decide on a key and agree the groove.....

No arguments, no pre-arranged extended solos, no formula- just three experienced musicians who make it look easy and sound great- astonishing, since this is only their fourth gig together.

Mike's bass has more than the usual number of strings, as befits a man with wide musical tastes. He handles funky reworkings of "Killing Floor" and Reconsider Baby" with ease, even takes a modest solo, after a couple of hours. Les is from the Charlie Watts school of rock solid, understated drummers, except that he smiles a great deal more, usually at Son's latest change of mood.

Yeah, Mr. Henry defies categorisation. He's a lanky guy in snakeskin boots. When he's really into it, the glasses come flying off the end of his nose and the Strat disappears behind his head. He's a friendly communicator, laughs a lot, doesn't take himself too seriously, happily shares the spotlight with guest performers, like tonight's local harp hero, Spider McKenzie. 30 years of live performances guarantee an easy command of material as diverse as the audience might request. Tonight we had a little BB, some Muddy, some Sonny Boy, some Elmore..... Son sprinkles in material from his latest CD, "Glenn Highway Blues" every now and then – earthy slide shuffles, tender blues poems to his wife, stories about the life of a travelling bluesman in a cold northerly state, where the bears outnumber the people.

Of course, being this versatile comes at a cost. Son is a guitar junkie and Ebay is his connection! What better excuse could there be for acquiring and playing a handsome array of classic instruments ('the firewood collection'), than to play the widest possible selection of styles? Not just well-worn Fenders and Gibsons, mind- Son is that rarest of creatures, a Lap-Steel blues player. His National 'New Yorker' adds the killer tones of a David Lindley but employed in an altogether darker manner than on those Jackson Browne records. "Bring it on home" and 'Hoochie-Coochie Man' with a California twist. Slide playing is a black art at the best of times; Son Henry tweaks your preconceptions, with good technique and feel, before changing pace again.....you liked that? Now try this! Texas twang? Sure. Minor keys from Memphis? Certainly. Scat vocals? Wait a moment.....

He's with us for a while- a couple of years, maybe. Don't miss the chance to soak up some genuine guitar blues, whichever kind you prefer- on CD, in solo concert but especially when he sets up for work with "all the toys" around him and a band worthy of the material. They'll be at the Arbroath Festival next weekend and in Orkney later this year; check <http://www.sonhenry.com/> for details.

Judging by the impact they made at the recent Dundee Blues Bonanza, I'd say one of these weekends should be an essential destination for the discerning music lover;-) Take your dancing shoes and don't expect an early night.

Added: August 13th 2005

Reviewer: [Eric Scott](#)

Score: ★★★★★

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Son Henry Band, at the Blue Lamp, Aberde

Posted by Anonymous on 2005-09-09 15:33:00

My Score: ★★★★★

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