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CD review: Heartache and Trouble, by Son Henry

The latest offering from Aberdeen's favourite Alaskan was released this week. Nine original tracks of quality guitar blues from the lap-steel maestro, backed by his all-star band, including the sensational Otto Lenz on harp, the sensitive rhythm section of Joel Lockman and John Clark and with occasional gravelly support from the voice of Blue Lisa Monroe. This is one skilled and tight band- the perfect accompaniment for the versatile and eclectic Mr. Henry, who rejoices in showing off the range of his influences and the ability it takes to incorporate so many of them into his style. Whether you like the minor chords of a slow BB King - like lament or a honking Texas shuffle, this record is going to slide straight in at the top of your playlist. Son is a great exponent of the spare, soulful lead lines which fill the songs with just the right amount of guitar- as opposed to the most notes that can be fitted into eight or sixteen bars. This handily leaves space for the rest of the musicians to perform- and isn't that the idea? Harp players, for instance, should buy this record just for Otto Lenz's harmonica clinic- and guitarists whose bands keep imploding might ponder Son's generous and humble approach to band leadership. Opening track is "Granite City Shuffle", a loping tribute to Son's adopted home, with an infectious riff and sparkling harp breaks. This is followed by "Richer than a Sheik", a Texas-shuffle love song (not the Grampian romantic's "richer than a sheep"!) that will put you on the dance floor. Slow slider "Heartache and trouble" follows, another harp spectacular, with a howling steel guitar break in the middle. Then comes a classic train shuffle, "First thing smoking", where Otto again gives the wannabes pause for thought and Son produces contrasting lap steel and guitar solos. "Teardrops on my Pillow" features one of Son's 'Peter Green meets Stevie Ray' solos- all the more impressive for being subtle and understated. I have to wonder how good he might become at this kind of thing if he ever fell out of love with open tunings? "Love My Baby" is a West-Coast style groove in praise of Son's long-suffering wife, with vocal and harp sparring deliciously and a great solo in the middle, straight from a vintage Lowell Fulson record. "Middle Man" is a bitter story of deceit and despair, with a slow swing beat. "They say Love" is a duet with Lisa Monroe, an upbeat coda to the preceding tune, with more fluid harp and guitar interplay. "Going back to Dallas" features Ms Monroe some more, in a manner reminiscent of an early Maggie Bell, fronting Butterfield's band on some forgotten session. To recap: Son Henry is one of the hidden talents of British blues- at least for the moment, with the breadth of technique which allows for a great variety of authentic grooves. You should make it a priority to catch one of his gigs this year (or contact him for a booking at www.sonhenry.com) and buy this disc in the meantime. Young Harp players should buy it for the educational value and older ones to give to their local guitar egomaniacs!

Added: February 27th 2006

Reviewer: [Eric Scott](#)

Score:

Hits: 91

Language: