

PHOENIX BLUES SOCIETY - ADVANCE TEXT



The **Backtrack Blues Band** was an early force on the Florida blues scene, beginning in the early 80's. Now celebrating their 37th year of existence, and powered by the two-fisted punch of frontman Sonny Charles' harmonica and the dynamic guitar work of Kid Royal, the band continues to break new ground with their tasty mix of Chicago and Texas blues. Last year, the band captured a powerful live performance at their hometown St. Petersburg's historic Palladium Theatre, and has released it as a CD/DVD called *Make My Home in Florida* (Harpo Records).

The nine-song set consists of four original tunes penned by Charles along with five covers, including a pair from Sonny Boy Williamson II ("Checkin' On My Baby" and "Your Funeral and My Trial"), Little Walter ("Nobody But You"), T-Bone Walker ("T-Bone Shuffle"), and B.B. King ("Woke Up This Morning"). Charles handles vocals on the Sonny Boy and Little Walter tracks, while Kid Royal sings on the latter two, and both get ample space to shine on their instruments of choice.

The four originals, all written by Charles in the Chicago Blues style, fit neatly with the cover tunes. The title track is a standout slow blues with a fine guitar solo, while "Heavy Built Woman" is a humorous mid-tempo shuffle. "Shoot My Rooster" is a laidback venture inspired by a noisy rooster at Charles' home in the Virgin Islands, and the set closer is the swinging "Tell Your Daddy."

This is a powerful set, nothing fancy at all.....just a great band playing the blues and playing them well. Charles is a charismatic frontman and dynamite harp player, and Royal does an excellent job in a variety of blues styles. The rhythm section (Little Johnny Walter – rhythm guitar, Joe Bencomo – drums, Stick Davis – bass) is exemplary. The DVD offers the same performance and the camera work and production is first-rate. If you like to watch and listen, too, then it's a well-spent fifty minutes. Either way that listeners decide to enjoy *Make My Home in Florida*, they will be pleased with the results. – Graham Clarke