



The Backtrack Blues Band is one of Florida's longest-lasting original blues bands, having been founded in the 1980's. Winner of the past three Tampa Bay Music Awards for Best Blues Band, the band (Sonny Charles – lead vocals/harmonica, Kid Royal – lead guitar, Little Johnny Walter – rhythm guitar, Joe Bencomo – drums, Jeff "Stick" Davis – bass) recently released their fifth CD, *Way Back Home* (Harpo Records), a ten-song set that has a solid mix of modern and traditional blues.

On the tough opening cut, "Goin' To Eleuthera," as in the island stop in the Bahamas, you can almost feel the warm ocean breezes and the gentle island vibe. That is just one of six originals, all penned by Charles. The funky "Tell Your Daddy" has the swampy feel of Excello Records, while "Shoot My Rooster" is pure vintage Chicago and "Heavy Built Woman" swings hard. Other originals include the Lone Star shuffle "Rich Man Blues" and the thumping closer, "Help Me Just This Time."

The cover tunes are well chosen and well done; Sonny Boy Williamson II's "Your Funeral, My Trial" and "Checkin' On My Baby," Little Walter's "Nobody But You," and the blues standard "Baby Please Don't Go." Though all of these are familiar tunes, the band has a ball playing these and it shows. In fact, the entire disc has a nice live in the studio feel and it really plays a key role in capturing the band's energy and enthusiasm.

With over thirty years under their belt, the Backtrack Blues Band shows that they're not resting on past accolades. *Way Back Home* is an excellent set of blues like they used to do them back in the day. Thank goodness they're still being done that way. – Graham Clarke