

BluesArt (A)

HANS THEESSINK Slow Train

Blue Groove 1620

With this release Hans once again confirms that he can hold his own with just about anyone in the contemporary blues/roots world.

This is a lovely bluesy set, featuring Hans's deep voice backed by a variety of string instruments (which he plays), Roland Guggenbichler on a selection of keyboards, the rhythm section of Erich Buchebner and Harry Stampfer on bass and drums respectively, plus the sublime harmony vocals of Ramadu, Blessings and Vusa aka Zimbabwean vocal group Insingizi. It is the latter who really add unique atmosphere to the gospel styled opener and the wistful sounding 'Thula Mama – Oh Mother Don't You Weep'; this demonstrating Hans' humanity, being a lament for Zimbabwe's tragic plight after the optimism of the years around that country's independence. There's empathy too with the excellent banjo led adaptation of the Crescent City's traditional 'Lil' Liza Jane', transformed into a pithy observation of New Orleans post-Katrina, whilst other touches such as the martial beat which accompanies the to-the-point 'God Created The World' provide evidence of the attention to detail that make this such a fine listening experience. 'Cry Cry Cry' and 'Let Go' move towards more of a rockabilly/ blues sound, whilst 'Love You Baby' hits a coolly bluesy groove with some fine slide work on the National Steel. 'Old Man Trouble' is certainly effectively moody, whilst 'Leaving At Daybreak' exhibits some of the sparse beauty of Bob Dylan's 'Blood On The Tracks'. 'May The Road' is nice and raggy, 'Run On For A Long Time' has something of a hard gospel feel to it, and the closing 'When Luther Played The Blues' – a tribute to Luther Allison – has a minimalist, John Lee Hooker inflected accompaniment that ends this CD on a very high note indeed. The sound throughout though is rich and organic.

Hans has been around for a long time now. It is rare to find someone of his generation still pushing the boundaries, crossing the borders, and still prepared to stand up and be counted. More power to him!

Norman Darwen