

David Blue (UK) May 2007

Hans Theessink – Slow Train (Blue Groove).

Hans Theessink has 20 albums to his name with Slow Train being the latest. He has been called an international blues treasure by the US press and Bo Diddley once described him as “One helluva guitar player”. The eponymous title track is slow, as the title suggests. It is moving and Gospel influenced with lovely relaxed slide guitar. Katrina is Americana of the highest order, delivered to perfection and hypnotic. He has based it on the New Orleans chant, Li'l Liza Jane and tells the story of Hurricane Katrina. God Created The World continues the theme of minimal instrumentation and is very easy going despite it being about the tragic events of 9/11. The gentle theme continues with Thula Mama/Oh God Don't You Weep, which has African influences (in this instance, Zimbabwe) as do some of the others and was inspired by stories from the African singers in his band. Cry Cry Cry is more up tempo but there is still this underlying gentleness from this master of the understated guitar. Let Go is a Country influenced foot-tapper. Mark Knopfler is the milestone for this kind of song and Theessink measures up very well.

Love You Baby is a hotch potch of styles; there's blues, R&B and Country in there somewhere but it all comes together very well. Old Man Trouble could easily be a track from Graceland. Theessink's dulcet tones waft over African influenced Country to great effect. Leaving At Daybreak highlights his deep, velvet voice again and he drifts into Mark Knopfler territory again with this gentle roots offering. May The Road has some more Gospel and African influences and is just a lovely little song. The traditional Run On For A Long Time has top class harmony, as ever, and is roots of the highest class. He finishes with When Luther Played The Blues. This is a tribute to his old friend, Luther Allison and is a blues, but not in the conventional sense. Theessink says that he had a dream where he saw Allison in front of him and tried to touch his hand. When he woke up in the morning the song was in his head.

This is a measured album from a European master.

<http://www.theessink.com/>