

Blues Revue, USA, Hal Horowitz, aug/sept.2007

HANS THEESSINK

Slow Train

Blue Groove 1620

Dutch singer and guitarist Hans Theessink continues the synthesis of blues, folk, and world music that's flourished on his latest albums and recent live DVD. On this acoustic project, Theessink again features the talents of three African vocalists, and the stirring results suggest Ry Cooder's early work and, perhaps more directly, Paul Simon's *Graceland*.

Most blues artists employ background vocalists to add soul or gospel underpinnings to their songs. But while religious feeling abounds here, Theessink places the three singers at the center of his arrangements, taking lead vocal lines along with stunning call-and-response work that transcends musical boundaries. The spellbinding results are due in part to live vocal takes recorded with no overdubs and with microphone placement that leaves space, even silence, in the mix.

Theessink has composed a stirring set of songs that seamlessly fuse his unplugged strumming, sonorous voice, and three-piece band into the very definition of laid-back comfort. His lovely Piedmont picking on "May the Road" is offset by harmonies that shift the tune halfway across the world. Such magnificent combinations of seemingly divergent elements drive this splendid album to spine-tingling heights. Theessink doesn't play traditional blues here; instead, he deftly references the genre as one of many stops on his global trek through the Delta, into backwoods folk, and onward to Africa. This beautifully crafted project boasts detailed arrangements performed with a calm, casual groove best described as hypnotic. Theessink has continued to redefine and expand the boundaries of his craft; now it's up to his audience to get on board. **(Blues Revue, USA, Hal Horowitz, aug/sept.2007)**