



East Coast Blues Society Blues Letter, Winter 2005

Little Derek and The Haemo Blues Band: Featuring Special Guest Charlie A'Court

From the "Donations in Action" newsletter of the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Center Foundation and from the Music Industry Association of Nova Scotia Member News and Events web pages we learned about the following fantastic blues project.

ECBS member, big blues fan, and harmonica player, Derek Caine, put his heart and soul into a new blues CD called "Little Derek and The Haemo Blues Band: Featuring Special Guest Charlie A'Court", released just before Christmas, 2004. Derek, who was diagnosed with leukemia in 2003, arranged that all proceeds from the sale of this CD will go to support leukemia research at the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre Foundation.

In addition to Charlie A'Court, the CD features a number of East Coast Blues musicians, with Derek himself contributing the harp work, and represents a live recording of the band at the Music Room during the summer of 2004. The remaining members of the band were Danny Sutherland on bass, Dave Skinner on drums and Ross Billard on piano/organ.

This live CD is a lot of fun - it begins with an instrumental which gives each band member a chance to get warmed up and includes some tasty guitar work by Charlie. With the next cut, the classic Sam Theard and Fleecie Moore, "Let the Good times Roll", things really take off. The disk offers very good sound for a live recording; there's that wonderful feeling of being in a small club. This track features great vocals by Charlie and again his biting guitar. "That's All Right Mama", the Big Boy Arthur Crudup tune claimed by Elvis, comes next; Charlie gives us clear, crisp, soulful vocals – the band knows how to stay out of the way, coming in when needed, but allowing Charlie lots of space otherwise.

The next track offers a slow, soulful version of the Willie Dixon classic "Little Red Rooster", with tasteful guitar licks from Charlie, whose singing is so clear you really get a chance to hear all the lyrics. As the song builds, Charlie turns it loose on the guitar solo, with carefully restrained support from piano and harp. On this cut, and generally throughout the disk, we are treated to tremendous vocals by Charlie, again with the band knowing when to play quietly. Things slow down a bit with "Good Time Charlie's Got The Blues," by Danny O'Keefe, which provides beautiful organ and piano work and once again just great vocals and well-placed harmonica fills.

This is followed by “The Haemo Blues” the “showcase tune” in Charlie's words; Caine wrote the lyrics for this song and it will take your breath away with its brutally honest testimony about Derek's emotional and physical journey with the disease. Great supporting vocals from Audrey Alexander accompany Charlie's singing and precise harp fills from Derek make this a song you will remember. This song and the previous one have a bit of the Matt Minglewood “rockin' the blues” feel to them.

Things pick up again with “Rack'em Up”, a tune written by Bruce McCabe and performed by Johnny Lang on his first major release of a few years ago; Charlie really stretches out on the vocals but leaves some room for a piano solo which nicely fits into the groove. The blues anthem, “Got My Mojo Working”, by Preston Foster, comes next. This song has probably been covered by every blues band in existence but once again Charlie takes it to another level with his powerful, expressive vocals, again with able support from the band. Next comes, “Kind Hearted Woman”, the Robert Johnson classic; I realize how sorry I am that I missed this show because of this song - it's given a treatment as a slow blues – with quiet support from the band and emotive vocals from Charlie; he really leans into this one; you can hear every drum beat – the harp, piano, and guitar individually – the band really comes together on this one!

The disk closes with “I'm Tore Down”, by Sonny Thompson; great backing vocals from drummer Dave Skinner really add to this track as well as several others on this CD; this tune eventually morphs into John Ellison's “Some Kind of Wonderful” - the band sounds like they are having great fun, there's perfect harp support – this is a good time tune! Throughout the disk you can hear warm applause and cheering from the audience – sounds like we all should have been there! This CD is great fun to listen to and obviously represents a very worthy cause! Contact the QEII Foundation at 902-473-7932 for further info. (Image from www.charlieacourt.com.)