

Roots Time Belgium – SHINE Review

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The Ghost Town Blues Band (GTBB) is the six-piece blues / roots band that was founded in 2009 in Memphis, TN, around singer / guitarist / multi-instrumentalist Matt Isbell. Matt Isbell is not a debutant because he has been musically active for more than 30 years. In 2007 Isbell toured with The Daddy Mack Blues Band and he each time opened the show solo with his own blues set. He later joined the band as a slide guitarist / harmonica player. Isbell was a co-producer of "Bluesfinger" [2010], the fourth studio album of The Daddy Mack Blues Band.

In 2009, GTBB debuted with the blues / roots album "Dust To Dust" and in 2012 "Dark House" (feat. Daddy Mack Orr & country blues artist Davis Coen) was released. GTBB became second at the IBC 2014 and in 2015 they were nominated as "Best Band" at the Blues Blast Music Awards.

As a successor to their third studio album "Hard Road To Hoe" [2015] they released the live album "Backstage Pass" last year. I also have to add Taylor Orr (guitar), Suavo Jones (trombone), Kevin Houston (sax), Tim Stanek (B3, piano, keys) & Matt Karner (bass) to the album line-up, because they are it who together with Isbell (vocals, cigar box, harmonica ...) provide the right funky grooves. The album features some previously released songs from the albums "Dust to Dust" [2009] and "Hard Road to Hoe" [2015].

This month, "Shine" is released as a new studio album. Again, next to Isbell and Orr, Jones, Houston and Karner are also part of the line-up, which was further supplemented by Andrew Mcneill (drums) and Cedric Taylor (keys).

The GTBB starts the album very soulfully with "Running Out of Time". Matt Isbell then lets the reins celebrate a little more and rocks on "Soda Pop", where his cigar box determines the groove. The wind instruments (Suavo Jones: trombone, trumpet & Kevin Houston: sax) open on the title song that also sounds soulful and very Southern. Cedric Taylor does the intro of "Givin' It all Away" on the piano, it can also be funky like on "My Father's Son" and with "Carry Me Home" the peace comes. There is still some campfire feeling with the beautiful Southern ballad "Heading Nowhere Fast" and then conclude with "Hey There Lucinda". It is a melancholic song with a lot of slide guitar and Isbell that again leaves us with questions.

The Ghost Town Blues Band also remains on "Shine" the band they want to be. They bring a contemporary blues variant that is built with elements from rock, solid funk and some charismatic North Mississippi hill country grooves. This mix of styles, in which the wind instruments are interspersed with three-string cigarbox guitars, always produces beautiful contrasts.