

BLUES BLAST MAGAZINE



Diana Rein - *Long Road*

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Rude Mood Records

12 songs - 59 minutes

Diana Rein's sophomore release, *Long Road*, is a slightly curious album. While holding itself out as a blues release, it actually sits more comfortably in the heavy rock category, albeit one with a blues influence. And then, somewhat confusingly, when you insert the album into a CD reader, it categorises its own genre as "Indie Rock."

Rein acknowledges Stevie Ray Vaughan as her over-riding inspiration, to the extent of naming her son after him, naming her record label after one of his songs and referencing him in her lyrics, and yet the music

itself is a long way away from the blues and blues-rock that SRV played. Perhaps the closest it comes to SRV is in the funky verse riff of "The Real Thing", although the vocals, chorus and break again veer into rock territory.

Elsewhere, Rein's primary influence appears to be the classic heavy rock of riff-based bands such as Deep Purple, Uriah Heep or even Black Sabbath – the riffs, vocal melodies and vocal performances from "Livin' Loud", "Green Light" or "Come Back Home" could have come from an early album by either band. Which isn't to say that there isn't a lot a variety on show - the gentle instrumental closer "Peace" has hints of Rainbow's "Weiss Heim", while the raucous driving rock of "Wild One" boasts a memorably effective riff. "Down Down Down" has echoes of Band of Skulls in its modern-day stomp, while the chorus effect on the guitars in "Don't Walk Away" and Rein's vocal melody give the song an enjoyably 80's feel. Individual songs often demonstrate significant structural dynamics, such as the segue in "Done Me Dirty" from its opening classic heavy rock riff to the acoustic verse and chorus.

Rein is clearly a serious talent. She produced the album, wrote all 12 songs and, in addition to providing all the vocals, she also played all the lead, rhythm and bass guitars. Favouring a reverb-laden lead tone, Rein is capable of producing some mouth-watering classic Strat tones in her quieter moments. What is generally absent however is any deep feeling for the blues and one has to wonder how much this is related to Rein's decision to use EZDrummer to provide the drum parts to the album.

A decision to use drumming software rather than a real drummer can be contentious. Drum programming is still a long way from being able to replicate the subtle dynamics made by a living person. This is particularly true for the grooves required in blues and rock where micro-variations in rhythm or volume can dramatically affect the overall sound of a recording. As a result, despite the superb mixing and mastering by Peter Duff, the songs on *Long Road* can sound like they are missing an intangible human element. So, for example, on "Wicked" there is a sense of unresolved anticipation as Rein builds and develops her guitar solo but the rhythm section doesn't quite follow.

There are many enjoyable moments on *Long Road* and more than enough signs that Rein has a lot to offer. It will be fascinating to see where she goes next.

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