

Professor Johnny P's Juke Joint

AUG

8

Diana Rein Takes Us On A Long Road - And It's A Good One

Now based in sunny Southern California, blues chanteuse Diana Rein has released her second album, **LONG ROAD** and by a circuitous route, a copy has landed on my desk where it did its damndest to disappear before I could open it. It was one of those screwball comedy moments that wasn't anyone's fault (okay, in reality it was mine) but it kept escalating until it seemed like this molehill had somehow taken on the size of Everest.

Not that Rein's people were anything but polite. Her publicist, the often overworked plate spinner extraordinaire Doug Deutsch, had his hands full reminding me that he had sent the CD out way back when and he hoped that I would find time to review it.

I was ready to review it but couldn't put my hands on it. Finally, while moving some things from one room to another (my preferred method of cleaning) a small package slipped out of my hands and landed at my feet.



Want to take a guess as to what was in it?

Want to take a guess as to what was in it?

But then things escalated again as I had to go in and have some surgery on one of my legs. (Nothing horribly serious – it's kind of like a Carpal Tunnel Syndrome surgery on your legs, so I can't even complain that I was under too much anesthesia.) So, I was not in too good of shape to do any reviewing despite being confined to my favorite chair.

Finally, I was ready to review and I was not finding it in my "To Be Reviewed" box that sits on my desk.

Not again...

But a thorough search found it in the "To Be Processed" box which also sits on my desk. I need to get a new system.

Fortunately, the album was so worth the wait.

Rein has a beautiful country blues voice that carries so much strength and her guitar playing is pretty damn good. It better be, because this entire album is a labor of love for Rein as she wrote all the 12 songs on the album and provided not only the vocals, but the guitar, bass and EZ Drummer herself.

There have been a few changes in her approach since this album came out and we'll talk about those in a minute but right now, let's sample **LONG ROAD**.

The album starts off with the title track, *Long Road*, a gospel flavored song that almost perfectly melds her voice and guitar to create a melancholy yet hopeful mood. Music is at its best when it manages to perfectly capture that *feeling* – that moment in life – whatever it is. This song captures it beautifully and clues the listener in that she is in for a remarkable journey.

She gets to rocking with *Wild One*, and that is often not an easy task to pull off. She's got a couple of nice guitar riffs that help drive the song but I wish her vocal was a little more prominent as I think this would be one of those numbers that really gets an audience moving.

Next up, Rein gets a little grungy with *Livin' Loud*, blues by way of garage rock. This is the kind of late night blues that gets the audience swaying under the singer's spell. The only drawback is again the vocals almost get swallowed by the guitar work.

She keeps rocking with *Green Light*, a song that has some strong lyrics and good guitar riffs. Rein is in full confidence on this number as she knows she has complete control. Very good song. She follows up with another rocker, *Rebel With A Cause*, which keeps the album moving at a crisp pace.

She's back to an alt-country vibe with *The Real Thing*. It's a good song with a number of good guitar runs. *Done Me Dirty* continues the feeling and here her voice is powerful and throaty. You know this is a woman who has been done wrong and she isn't going to take it.

Rein slows things down nicely with *Don't Walk Away*, a haunting song of longing. Her voice practically cries and her guitar work is at its best on this song. Beautiful.

She picks up the tempo with *Come Back Home*, another song that explores the boundaries between rock and blues. Rein is one of those artists who keeps one foot in each camp and manages to bring the two together into a satisfying new sound.

The song *Wicked* is another great number with deep guitar runs setting the mood before giving way to plaintive vocals. While I appreciate her rocking numbers, sometimes the songs that showcase her voice are the most memorable. This one, along with *Don't Walk Away* and the title track stand out the most to me.

Down Down Down starts out with some slower, more controlled power – the kind of song that amplifies a state of mind – then gives way to a faster tempo that drives the song. Finally, the instrumental *Peace* closes out the album with a beautiful contemplative number. Her guitar work has been stellar throughout the album and here it is finally given a chance to shine without any competing forces.

When the artist assumes every position on an album, you get a complete vision – but that also comes with certain drawbacks. Sometimes an artist may be great at a number of tasks but be deficient in others. I think Rein is a good guitarist and a terrific vocalist, but I think she showed promise as a producer, but think she might have been better off with someone else behind the controls.

I believe that in most cases a project is improved with collaboration between like-minded artists. Rein has done an admirable job with **LONG ROAD** and I have learned from her website, <http://www.dianarein.com/>, that she has recently teamed up with Papermoon Gypsies, a Southern California based group that should combine nicely with her to give her a rich full sound. I don't know if they have any plans to record at this time, but I would welcome that news wholeheartedly.

In the meantime, be sure to check out this latest album and you can order her first album, 2007's **THE BACK ROOM** from her website. Be sure to catch her live if you can – she is playing in a number of festivals and when you do, tell her The Professor sent you.

<http://professorjohnnyp.blogspot.com/2016/08/diana-rein-takes-us-on-long-road-and.html>