

# Mp3 Richie Hart - Blues In The Alley

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Funky, classic guitar trio jazz in the Wes Montgomery / George Benson tradition 10 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Bebop, JAZZ: Traditional Jazz Combo Details: You can always tell when a guitarist has spent any substantial amount of time on the organ group circuit. It's in the blues-drenched phrasing and surging rhythmic feel on uptempo burners and in the knowing, take-your-time approach on ballads.

Connecticut-based guitarist Richie Hart demonstrates those depthful qualities in spades on Blues in the Alley, a collaborative effort with bassist Rick Petrone and drummer Joe Corsello - and Richie's third CD as a leader and debut for ZOHO Music. A protege of George Benson, Hart got his feet wet on the organ circuit in the late '70s with the Hammond B-3 organ great Lonnie Smith (aka "The Turbanator") in a working trio that featured an 18-year-old Marvin "Smitty" Smith on drums. Along the way he's also put in time on the bandstand with such B-3 greats as Don Patterson, Jack McDuff, Big John Patton and Rueben Wilson. The Benson influence in Hart's playing naturally comes across here on a soulful rendition of Clifford Brown's easy-loping blues "Sandu," on a Latin-tinged arrangement of John Coltrane's "Black Pearls," a 12/8 Afro-Cuban flavored rendition of "Autumn Leaves" and also on the title track, the greasy B-3 jam "Blues in the Alley", which happens to be the only cut on the entire CD where Hart plays with a pick. The other obvious influence on Hart's playing on Blues in the Alley is jazz guitar icon Wes Montgomery (Hart's last recording, released in 1991, was Remembering Wes with Ron Carter, Lonnie Smith, Kenny Washington and Jimmy Cobb). Montgomery's influence is readily apparent in Hart's beautiful octave work on Lalo Schifrin's lush ballad "Theme from 'The Fox'" and also on his facile, thumbed lines on "On A High Note," an original inspired by Montgomery's "Road Song." "Wes is like my idol," says Hart, an associate professor of jazz guitar at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. "At Berklee I teach a Wes Montgomery course, and over the years I've done about 150 transcriptions of Wes. I guess I've been working on Wes' music now for about 40 years. Most people focus in right away on the fact that Wes plays octaves. Of course, that is his signature, and it's one of the things that attracted me when I first heard him. But when you look closer at his playing you begin to see that his phrasing and feel are so completely fresh. He creates the thing right in the moment and he's not afraid to take chances. So

to me, he is like the epitome of what a jazz musician is supposed to be." Elsewhere on *Blues in the Alley*, Hart stakes out some pleasingly melodic territory on the luxuriant original "Fresh Air," he puts a modern twist on Monk with a hip-hop flavored rendition of "Well You Needn't" and swings with abandon on the surging title track "Blues in the Alley" on which he digs in and goes for chorus after chorus of bristling single-note burn. He opens the soulful Hoagy Carmichael ballad "Georgia on my Mind" with a gorgeous, Joe Pass-like solo guitar intro before being joined by the band, and closes the collection in dramatic fashion with a solo guitar medley from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*. "That one was inspired by my buddy George Benson because he used to play stuff from that show all the time," says Hart, "and when I heard him do it I got inspired to do something of my own with it." Accompanying Hart, and co-leaders on this outing are seasoned veterans Rick Petrone and Joe Corsello, who provide a swinging, supportive undercurrent throughout *Blues in the Alley*. Petrone's list of credits includes work with Maynard Ferguson, Joe Beck, Houston Person and Etta Jones, Don Friedman, Richie Cole and Roy Hargrove. Corsello has recorded and performed with Sam Rivers, Barry Miles, Jack McDuff, Gene Bertoncini, John Scofield, Chris Brubeck and Roy Hargrove. Both rhythm section mates bring their considerable chops and bandstand experience to bear on *Blues in the Alley*. They are joined on four tracks by keyboardist Pete Levin, a veteran of the Gil Evans Orchestra. Special guest saxophonist Gerry Niewood (of Chuck Mangione fame) also appears on the Latin-tinged version of "Black Pearls." Hart distinguishes himself with equal parts seasoned restraint and unadulterated burn on *Blues in the Alley*. As he points out, "Sometimes guitar players have a tendency to play stuff for flash. It's that whole 'Look at this tricky lick or fancy thing I'm going to show you.' But the way that I look at it can be summed up by a statement that Cannonball Adderley made a long time ago. He said, 'You don't try to be hip. There's no such thing. Either you are or you're not.' And it's just that simple. When Wes played he never tried to be hip or tried to play it great, he just tried to be what he was and it always came across as hip. He didn't go into anything with any preconceived ideas, he'd just play, you know? That natural feel, that hipness is what really always came across for him every time." That same hip quality comes across loud and clear in Hart's playing here. And like his idol Wes, Richie's playing is strictly in the moment throughout. "That's what it's gotta be about," he maintains. "If you don't do that then you're really not playing the music. All the great players created right on the spot. That's part of the whole essence of what jazz was originally designed from. And if you don't go there, then you're kind of missing the point of the music." Hart, Petrone, Corsello

and company go there every time they hit the bandstand. And they dig deep in that regard on Blues in the Alley. -- Bill Milkowski Recorded at George Benson Studios, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, and the Carriage House, Stamford, CT, in 2003. Re-mixed and mastered at The Firehouse, Stamford, CT. Engineer: Richard Corsello. Producers: Richie Hart, Rick Petrone, Joe Corsello and Michael Cuscuna. Photography: Sergio Royzen. Package Design: 27.12 Design Ltd., New York. Executive producer: Joachim Becker.

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