

Memphis Grooves Wav

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The debut recording by a remarkable new musical talent is a joyous occasion. Memphis Grooves by Brandon O. Bailey is about to knock down a few doors and thump on a few hard heads. It's true blues for the year 2010 and beyond--which is to say, it's powerful stuff from the mid-Southern crossroads where blues, soul, gospel, and funk have always jostled and recombined in unexpected ways. Brandon can do it all. He literally does it all. With the exception of "Superstition," where I join him on harp and footdrums, every single sound on this album is something Brandon produced with his mouth, harmonica, shaker, and thumping foot. There are no sidemen here, or samples, and no more than a handful of overdubs. Using only the aforementioned props, plus a looping pedal, Brandon created almost all of these songs in the studio in real time. This alone is a stunning accomplishment. Born in St. Louis, raised in south Memphis, with a great-grandfather who played some harmonica, Brandon has an unusually bluesy pedigree. In 2008 he rose through the ranks of several hundred contestants to make the finals of the Orpheum Star Search competition in Memphis, then won the finals by performing the J. Geils Band's harmonica showpiece, "Whammer Jammer," with the house band. "Whammer Jammer" is here, but Brandon--an innovator as well as historian--throws in a couple of surprises that freshen it up. He also demonstrates his mastery of the tradition that lies behind Magic Dick's harp wizardry. Two of the cuts here, "Bye Bye Bird" and "Nine Below Zero," are classics ripped straight from the Sonny Boy Williamson songbook. Brandon stands at the ribbon mic, stomps his foot, and blows old-school blues on the big low Marine Band harp. He takes his time. He makes it sound unforced, powerful, right. These two tracks alone will convince hard-core aficionados that the blues are alive and well in Memphis, Tennessee. The ambition of Memphis Grooves reveals itself in the scope of Brandon's pop-soul reclamation project. He remakes Ray Charles's "Hit the Road, Jack" (1961) as a swinging harp workout, dials in some indigo mood-lighting as he croons Bill Withers's "Grandma's Hands" (1971), complete with spooky hummed background vocals, and layers octave-pedaled vocal basslines and harp riffs into a trippy, tranced-out version of Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" (1982). One of Brandon's strongest influences, as he's the first to admit, is Son of Dave, a.k.a. Benjamin Darvill, a Canadian singer and harp player known for his one-man performances

involving multiple loop tracks and intense, quirky vocals. Brandon is the son of Son of Dave, with a vengeance. He covers two of Dave's originals, "Hellhound" and "Devil Take My Soul" (Brandon substitutes People for Devil), along with Dave's remake of Taj Mahal's "Squat that Rabbit," and although the family resemblance is indisputable, Brandon O. Bailey shines through loud and clear. Memphis Grooves also contains three original compositions that flesh out our portrait of this important young artist. "Blues Ball" opens the album with a South Memphis vibe; Brandon lays down the groove loop by loop before blowing some more harp and sing/talking us towards his party-in-progress. "Soul Thing" is a meditative, minor-key slow jam with a spooky chromatic harp solo that lingers in the corners of your mind. And "Harp Box" stakes Brandon's claim on the hybrid idiom that unites beat-boxing and harmonica, offering a bit of improvised rat-a-tat-tat that brings to mind dancer Savion Glover snapping and popping on his taps. Brandon O. Bailey can do it all, and does it all. He grabs your attention. He grooves hard. He plays rough when he needs to and waxes lyrical when that's called for. He knows how to take his time. He has mastered his influences and come up with an original sound. As the old guys used to say, the kid can blow. The music is in good hands, and the fun is just about to start. --adapted from the liner notes by Adam Gussow

When you purchase Memphis Grooves in this format, you get a very large zip file (470 mb) containing the following: 1) 13 tracks totaling 50 minutes, in WAV format. These are very large, CD-quality files. 2) Full-color liner notes in the PDF format

For harmonica players who want to jam along, here is a list of the songs on the album, along with the harp keys that Brandon is using: Blues Ball: Low Eb Whammer Jammer: A Hellhound: Low Eb Billie Jean: E Harpbox: Bb natural minor People Take My Soul: Bb Natural Minor Grandmas Hands: Low F# Bye Bye Bird: Low C Soul Thing: C Chromatic Squat That Rabbit: Low C Hit The Road Jack: Db Superstition: Ab Nine Below Zero: Low C Another Modern Blues Harmonica production. modernbluesharmonica.com

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