Mp3 Mark Wenner & The Bel Airs - Mama Tried

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With songs from Haggard, Acuff, Dylan, etc, one might be tempted to think that Mama Tried isn't really a blues disc, but this one's got deep enough roots that every blues fan will dig it. 11 MP3 Songs BLUES: Rockin' Blues, COUNTRY: Country Rock Details: Billtown Blues Association Nov/Dec 2002 WOW! This is one sweet piece of work. I was not at all surprised with that, as I have been a fan of the BelAirs and the Nighthawks since God was a boy. On Mama Tried, Mark and company pay tribute to a handful of their early influences. For those of you who may be unfamiliar with the artists, the BelAirs have been touring for decades and are considered by many to be one of the best roots music bands in the country. Mark Wenner is a founding member and frontman for the Nighthawks, who with 30 years on the road are considered by most to be "the world's greatest bar band". Needless to say, this is a great combination. Covered here are the tunes that we all grew up listening to...tunes recorded and made famous by legends in the Country, Folk, Blues and R&B fields. Merle Haggard, Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, Bob Dylan, Jimmy Reed, Marvin Gaye, Junior Walker and Brook Benton are all represented. Also included on the disc are two originals by Mark and the BelAirs that will blow your socks off. This is one of those recordings that made me feel all warm inside, and the originals had the sound and feel of the classics. This was a labor of love. ..evident with every note. - Bill Wilson Blues Bytes Bill Mitchell December 2002 Blues harmonica aficionados will want to track down the latest solo disk from Nighthawks' harp dude Mark Wenner, who is backed on Mama Tried (Right On Rhythm) by Missouri band The Bel Airs. This one starts off smokin' right away with an incendiary instrumental "If Glen Would Swing," a jumpin' shuffle number featuring Wenner's great harp blowing. The great thing about Wenner is that he refuses to be pigeonholed into any one particular musical style when he's out on his own; this CD is no exception, as he follows the opener with a bluesy version of Roy Acuff's "Walkin' After Midnight" that is darn near unrecognizable from the original. Just think about what kind of stuff Muddy Waters would have done if he had appeared on stage at the Grand Ole Opry; it's just way too cool for words. He then moves into a Motown mood with the Berry Gordy-penned "Try It Baby," a pleasant jazzy shuffle which was once recorded by Marvin Gaye. This one features tasteful, T-Bone-style guitar work from Dave Pruitt. Wenner then treats the harmonica like a sax

with some soaring solos on the Bob Dylan tune "She Belongs To Me." Just to keep going in many different directions, the band then comes through with a rockin' version of Merle Haggard's "Mama Tried." This one focuses more on Wenner as a vocalist, with his gravelly singing framing a couple of good harp solos. The band collaborates on another original instrumental, a slow walkin' blues, "Howie's Hammer," that picks up steam midway through with Wenner's harp sounding like a train engine pulling along a heavy weight. Pruitt gets to show off his nice, restrained guitar playing on the midtempo shuffle "Baby "You've Got What It Takes"; this guy comes from the school of 'less is more,' a lesson that a lot of contemporary guitar players would do well to learn. While everything here is firmly based in the blues, Wenner takes it a little more basic with Jimmy Reed's "Let's Get Together." He gets the Reed vocal chops just right, and Pruitt comes in at just the right time with appropriate guitar licks, framing Wenner's singing and harp playing. Mama Tried ends much too quickly after about 38 minutes with a snaky cover of the Jr. Walker instrumental "Cleo's Mood," done in a much slower tempo than the original. With songs from Haggard, Acuff, Dylan, etc, one might be tempted to think that Mama Tried isn't really a blues disc, but this one's got deep enough roots that every blues fan will dig it.

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