



Joe Pitts' new release, *Ten Shades of Blue*, pays homage to his influences. As the liner notes indicate, the listener should not regard this as a tribute record or a cover record. Take it for what is... a great big 'thank you' to artists who have influenced Pitts' work.

Pitts keeps this package of ten songs close to home and, as any great artist will do, leaves his mark on each one. Solid, tasty, full bodied guitar solos pepper the disc and once again underline Pitts' more than ample prowess on his instrument. This piece of work is more than a guitar record though. It shows Pitts' versatility and where it has come from.

The disc also shows Pitts stretching out on his vocals and giving the listener a bucket full of soul, from angry and sorrowful to sage and cocky. This is a side of Pitts that is fresh and energizing.

The CD kicks off with Albert King's 'Breaking Up Somebody's Home'. The vocals are dark and painful, painting a picture of a shadow on a street corner, a lone tear on a cheek, contemplating the nonchalant attitude of the retribution that follows a broken heart.

Gary Getts and Chicken James Dorris highlight Muddy Waters' 'Crosseyed Cat'. Getts' harp work bounces the song along and Dorris' piano is woven in nicely. Pitts channels Muddy's attitude and makes you want to kick that damned cat across the room for looking at you. This is the coolest song on the disc.

The drum work on the CD is handled by a trio of outstanding musicians. George Mitchell contributes the backbeat to five tunes and Lance Womack lands on three. Memphis drummer Jahleel Eli plays drums on 'Clouds on the Horizon', a Walter Trout tune.

The song keeps the same dark and moody vibe Trout is known for. Jimmy Lynn's bass work steps out on this song (as it does all through the album). This is one of the tunes where Pitts' stretches out on his vocals, reaching deep and pulling out some passion that begins to set this disc apart from his other work.

Frisbee Coleman does some nice work on the B3 on Luther Allison's 'Pain in the Streets', floating around in the background and making a nice bed for a sexy guitar solo. The song is groovy and Pitts' vocals come on like he's conversing with his audience, playing the role of the observant and aloof philosopher of love. That is until the end when his voice calls out about the 'pain in my heart'.

Coleman shows up again on 'Freedom from My Demons', an Eric Gales piece. The B3 work is very tasty and not at all overpowering. Pitts' vocals beg to be set free from the hellhounds that are torturing him. Full of anguish and frustration Pitts', delivers one of the vocal highlights on the disc, showing off a sultry, sexy side. This is the song you light your number up to and most definitely the tune you take your baby to bed to. Yep, it's that song.

Albert Collins' 'Put the Shoe on the Other Foot' gives the listener a nice shuffling, funky mix. The B3 and guitar play nicely again on this tune with Pitts' guitar work slipping around the B3 and vocals.

'I'm worried' has got the coolest vocal work on the disc. Pitts' vocals are fuzzed up while he delivers through a Shure Green Bullet harmonica mic. Pitts also drops some very nice slide guitar on this one.

For anyone who thinks Joe Pitts can't play or sing the blues, if you are not convinced of it by now, then 'No Stranger to the Blues' should put that notion to rest. Pitts takes this cut from *The Kinsey Report* and howls his defiance at being dealt the blues. The guitar work is clean and especially tasty. You can almost see the dim lit stage through the smoke that hangs thick in the juke, the clatter of empty glasses in the background and the smell of whiskey in the air.

John Mayall's 'Walkin' On Sunset' is a jumping shuffle with the B3 playing a more prominent role. Terry Bradley provides a great slide run on this tune as he struts up and down Sunset, not cocky but definitely saying 'Here I am ya'll'.

The final cut is another testament to Pitts' versatility on vocals and as a musician. Performing Peter Green's 'The World Keeps on Turning', Pitts demonstrates why he is considered one of the best pickers around. The tune is Pitts singing and playing his National tricone resonator. He is alone with the blues on this cut and proves that he is capable of singing the blues.

The CD cover is very cool and is representative of what's on the disc. Old, sepia toned photos set the stage for the smoky juke, the dark alleys and the good lovin' gone bad attitude the listener will find on this disc. Like Pitts' performance on these ten shades of blue, it's a picture of someplace that reminds you this is where the blues come from.