

Big Pete – Choice Cuts

Delta Groove Music DGPCD149

Pieter “Big Pete” Van Der Pluum made his Delta Groove debut with “Way Down South” on The Mannish Boys’ CD “Shake For Me”, following that impressive performance with his first full length CD for the label – a debut that more than fulfils the promise shown on that earlier recording.

Dutchman Big Pete freely acknowledges the influence of Lester Butler on his music, and his harp playing is certainly permeated with the brashness, attitude and creativity of Butler’s work – but he only uses this and other influences as a launch-pad for his own dynamic and explosive take on the blues.

On this impressive project, Pete is accompanied by a veritable “who’s who” of today’s blues scene with names like Johnny Dyer, Al Blake, Kim Wilson, Paul Oscher, Shawn Pittman, John Marx, Kirk Fletcher, Kid Ramos, Rob Rio and Rusty Zinn, at various times joining the crack core band of Alex Schultz, Jimi Bott and Willie J. Campbell – and with a line-up like that there can only be one result – blues of the highest order.

Having mentioned the influence of Butler, it is appropriate that Pete opens with a butler number, “Driftin’ perfectly demonstrating his aggressive harp attack and compelling vocals to telling effect – Muddy’s “Just To Be With You” is given a similar treatment replete with feral harp and vocals, bone-rattling piano and menacing guitar from Fletcher.

On “I Got My Eyes On You” Pete captures the “backporch” plaintiveness of Smokey Smothers vocals, with Schultz doing the same on guitar – Al Blake adding some wonderful Little Willie Anderson inspired harp. “Hey Lawdy Mama” is a lowdown grinder with the harp having an early and earthy Carey Bell feel, Fletcher adding buzzing guitar that conjures up a vision of a demented Johnny Heartsman. Jody Williams’ “I Was Fooled” finds Pete’s moody vocals underpinned by menacing gutbucket harp, (melding the influences of the Wolf and James Cotton), Pittman adding lowdown Mel Brown inflected guitar, whilst Rio’s Spannesque piano literally crawls all over the mix.

“Chromatic Crumbs” is a superb instrumental that is permeated with the spectres of William Clarke and George Smith and more Heartsman inspired guitar – whilst Little Walter/Willie Dixon’s “I’m A Business Man” finds Pete adding the influences of Big Walter Horton and Rice Miller to the mix as his harp melds mellifluously with Paul Oscher’s melodica to make this a melancholy masterpiece.

Add in tremendous covers of numbers by Albert King, Jimmy Rogers, Wolf, Little Walter and Slim Harpo, and you have a set that is a “must purchase” for any lover of quality harmonica blues. “”Choice Cuts” indeed! (www.deltagroovemusic.com)

Rating 9

Mick Rainsford