

It won't sell a million but it did sell me



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There are two tracks on this album that tell me the last thing Jan Blaauw and his mates should be thinking about is retirement. 'Pretty Suits' and 'Drop of Rain' stuck with me after my first listen and seem to encapsulate Jan's knack for creating thoughtful, insightful lyrics tinged with just the right amount of bitterness to match his gravelly vocal style. He has a knack of evoking imagery beyond the words, something that takes the traditional bluesy rock genre somewhere fresh and different. Just as he did with Jura, when his gritty soulful vocals served to counter point Ruben Hoeke's highly accomplished, super fluid guitar work.

That was six years ago so I didn't know quite what to expect when Jan sent Dunkey SR's CD across our virus plagued planet for me to experience. I knew Jan had had to resurrect himself from a few life set backs in the intervening years and the humour of the self deprecating title 'Retirement Plan', plus the ramshackle wooden barn on the cover hinted at a record that would be perhaps self reflective, introspective, even home made. Not always a bad thing in the over produced over stimulated world we live in and this record is as the band's name informs us a musical slam dunk. It may not sell a million in the era of cheesy glamour pop and endless reworkings but it's worth a listen for a different take on rootsy bluesy rock. Subtle and arresting - though not too serious or self regarding.

Dunkey SR sees the legendary Willem Swikker in charge on piano and Hammond with the addition of Ruben on guitar. Plus Rick Nieuwenhuizen on bass and JaapJan Schermer on drums. A formidable line up for those familiar with Dutch blues and rock. And this is no farewell package. It is in fact a completely new musical project, all be it one that's been 47 years in gestation.

1973 being the year that Jan, then just seven, heard Willem practicing with his band in an old shed on the edge of the Dutch countryside (hence the cover). It was the moment Jan Blaauw decided that music would be his path. And over the years Jan and Willem's paths have crossed with their respective bands - but this is the first time they have collaborated together for a complete album. Starting to pen this set off in 2016.

The final product is a fine mix with the piano and hammond broadening the blues rock palet and Ruben adding some subtle guitar flourishes through many of the tracks, all held in place by Rick and JaapJan's soulful playing.

As said upfront, lyrically Retirement Plan is highly engaging -and the CD's last track 'Drop of Rain' is particularly emotive. While 'Pretty Suits' serves up old school tear it all down new wave style lyrics in a catchy package that to my ears hints at Elvis Costello, Oliver's Army or Blood and Chocolate.

The occasionally dark words within the party rock opener 'One Hell of a Party' tells you that this is an album made by musicians who have seen it all - the good and the bad. And the perfectly sparse piano points in 'The Old Rusty Track' also remind the listener that experience counts for as much as youthful enthusiasm.

That said there are a few barnstormers as well, stand outs are 'Get Loaded' and 'Just Three Days' (with Frans Lewakabessy as guest on lead guitar) along with Willem's Hammond leading the way in 'To Bear This All'. Hopefully I can get over to the mini Amsterdam that is Alkmaar soon, and see Dunkey SR. Because in a world of fake platitudes you need to grab the real deal whenever you can.