

CD Reviews

The Driver's Seat DeeJay Gosper and the Hot Flush Blues Band



Local Blues legend, Dorothy Jane (or DeeJay as she is known) Gosper has released her fourth album, *The Driver's Seat*. The title, we can assume, refers to being in control and, continuing with the metaphor, *The Driver's Seat* steps up a gear from previous releases.

Since her well-publicised brush with breast cancer and her subsequent support and advocacy for the cause, DeeJay has emerged with a 'take no prisoners' approach to her career. However, the reality for local recording artists who wish to stay solvent, let alone make a living, is that self-produced and released music is the only sensible choice.

Another reality is that local fans of the blues seem to prefer to listen to familiar fare if not Blues standards. This is a great pity because the strongest material on this album tends to be the self-penned titles. First up is the band's ambitious take on 80s Rock diva, Karen Lawrence's, *Cadillac Blues*. If there is any doubt that DeeJay is one of Australia's best harp players, the argument ceases as the track ends. Many readers will be familiar with the next track, *Déjà Vu*, a self-penned song that the band has been playing live for a while now. The band really hits its stride on this track and settles in to its natural groove. The third, and strongest and longest, track on the album, *Sadder than Sad*, sees DeeJay and Baz Cooper, in his heavenly Hammond Highness, rip into the Blues (the real, not faux variety). A glass of red wine, an open fire and *Sadder than Sad* would be 8minutes 53 seconds of pure Blues bliss.

In *When a Woman's Had Enough*, DeeJay takes on the unenviable prospect of going head to head with Shemekia Copeland and the incomparable Bettye Lavette who have both recorded the song...and the local girl holds her own! However, this reviewer has some issues with some of the production choices on the album, particularly as they relate to the treatment of drums on some of the tracks, and the over-processed approach on this track does not do the performances any favours.

Driver's Seat sees DeeJay, complete with a not-so-subtle swipe at Ted Mulry's misogynistic *Jump In My Car*, make a sassy, confident, feminist statement. The band continues the theme with *What You See* and, again, what we see is what a fine talent DeeJay is on the harp. Not for her, blowing licks for the sake of it. Each solo is a well-considered, finely crafted musical statement. The Blues standard, *Trouble In Mind*, sees DeeJay plumb the deeper register of her range to good effect and then adroitly frost the cake with another outstanding solo. The foot tapping *My Addiction To You*, lifts the tempo and sets the listener up for the barn-storming official end of the CD, Louis Prima's *Jump, Jive and Wail*.

Two bonus tracks, *Under The Covers* and *Hot Flush Blues*, new versions of previously-released tracks, are included. Both are legitimate and interesting interpretations of DeeJay's back catalogue. On the basis of this release, we can anticipate a highly anticipated 'classic' in the future. It may take an independent producer and some expensive studio time but this reviewer can see no reason why DeeJay and her band can't become a higher profile national act or even break into the international circuit.

Verdict: Recommended with the best to yet to come.

Gary Stanford