



CHRIS FLORY (WITH DUKE ROBILLARD AND FRIENDS)

BLUES IN MY HEART

Stony Plain Records SPCD 1288

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On his first three recordings as leader, all released during the 1990s, Chris Flory established himself as a committed keeper of the flame of swing guitar in the Charlie Christian tradition. Even the vintage sound of his guitar—a 1948 Gibson L7—helped to locate him in the mainstream of Christian’s followers. With an interesting selection of tunes and fine playing from start to finish, each of those recordings—“For All We Know,” “City Life,” and “Word on the Street”—would fit nicely into any jazz guitar CD collection.

“Blues in My Heart” pretty much picks up where “Word on the Street” left off in 1996, with the opening tune, “Scam,” a medium-tempo Gene Ammons riff, showcasing Flory’s blues chops on a seven-chorus solo.

This cut also features Duke Robillard, Flory’s fellow native of Providence, Rhode Island, for eight choruses before the two guitarists trade fours for another four choruses. After that rousing start, “Willow Weep for Me” serves as a bit of a breather, with Sugar Ray Norcia’s resonant vocals evoking Stanley Turrentine’s tenor sax phrasing on his classic recording of that standard from 1960.

Norcia also sings on a version of Percy Mayfield’s hit “Please Send Me Someone to Love,” and Robillard chips in an earnest vocal on the title track

(a Benny Carter chestnut) that closes the album. Recalling Flory’s days as sideman for Scott Hamilton, that stellar tenor sax player adds his retro style to the mix on “Shine” and “If Dreams Come True.”

For the most part, the rest of the instrumentals, “Bernie’s Tune,” “I’ve Got a Right to Sing the Blues,” and “Blue Bossa,” follow a fairly straightforward formula: head in, multi-chorus solos by both Flory and Robillard, head out. While Robillard’s presence is felt throughout (he is the producer as well as a player), keyboardists Mike LeDonne and John Bunch, who contributed greatly to Flory’s earlier recordings, are conspicuous in their absence. But drummer Chuck Riggs and bassist Marty Ballou keep this session swinging, giving Flory and Robillard plenty of support and plenty of room to stretch out. Like Flory’s earlier CDs, “Blues in My Heart” is a keeper.

Reviewed by Thomas O’Grady