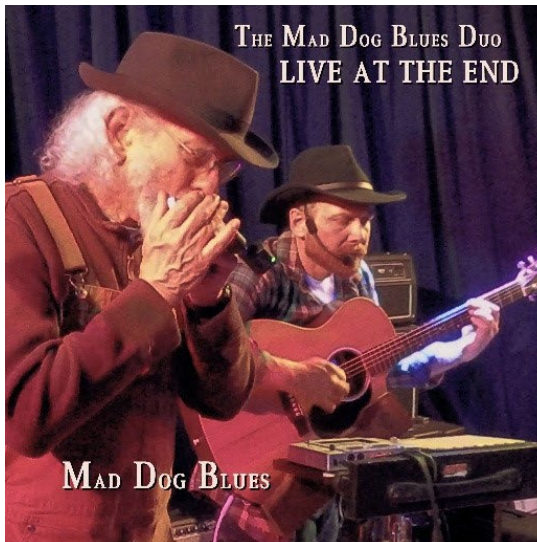


[CD Review by Chick Cavallero for the High Plains Blues Society](#)

The Mad Dog Blues Duo LIVE AT THE END - Mad Dog Blues



NOTE: Mad Dog Blues' seventh album, THE MAD DOG BLUES DUO LIVE AT THE END, captures an inspired performance of entire River City Roots (2023) album in front of a live audience at their River City Roots CD Release Concert on 4/23/23 at The End in Lafayette, Colorado. All eleven songs, including the Skip James' cover featuring Lionel Young on violin, were performed in order, THE MAD DOG BLUES DUO LIVE AT THE END will also be released on 8/23/23 as an audio album and will be available on all streaming services under the artist's name, "Mad Dog Blues". All 10 original tracks are now available as LIVE VIDEO (on Tidal, Apple Music & Vevo).

I've been following Mark Friedman and his harmonica, aka Mad Dog, for some time now. As far back as Harmonica Loowinski, then Papa Juke, Mojo Medicine Show, Blues Lightning and now Mad Dog Blues, which is a conglomeration of Mad Dog Duo, Mad Dog Trio and the full band, Mad Dog Blues. He has grown amazingly over the years, developing into a true harp master and maestro. One thing he always does is stick to the blues, no blues rock here, just pure blues. And what Mad Dog Blues focuses on is Country blues - call it folk blues, rural blues, hokum blues, whatever, this is downhome blues from early in the 20th century, the real deal blues spawned from the rural musicians and hokum performers of the 20s and 30s from which urban blues and eventually the current 'blues genre' evolved. They go deep into the roots of their music and create songs that celebrate the diversity of those roots from the people of color creators before the music was split by commercialism and racism. The result is something they call Colorado Country Blues. Not familiar with Mad Dog Blues? You can catch them this weekend Aug 27 at 5PM on Avogadro's patio in Fort Collins. As reviewer Jack Grace has mentioned, "We are fortunate to have Colorado bands such as Mad Dog Blues that build on true traditions while absorbing and blending our local piquant flavors."

This album is The Mad Dog Blues Duo - Mad Dog Friedman on harp and Sean Bennight on acoustic guitar, and they have risen to the top of Colorado's Country Blues. Both are masters of their instruments and of differing vocal styles. The result is the innovative creative sound of two talented musicians playing off of each other as they share a true love for this unique music and sound. In April 2023 Mad Dog Blues did a CD release of their CD *River City Roots* at The End in Lafayette. This is a live version recorded at the release and while the original was an excellent CD, 'live' is how this music is best appreciated. The River Roots CD title plays on both Mad Dog's and Sean's roots of growing up in St. Louis, the River City, and a tribute to all of the original St. Louis Blues innovators.

The Mad Dog Blues Duo gives fresh new life to the classic harmonica-guitar duo sound as their twin talents explore innovative ways to explore the world of Country Blues. The beauty of a live recording is that the duo gets to do longer versions of the songs and add some amazing solos to them, with some of the songs doubling in length allowing both musicians to have many opportunities to show their skills with no jealousy just mutual love of the music. Plus, this live show at The End had the incomparable blues legend Lionel Young on hand to add his electric violin to cut six the Skip James classic, "Hard Time Killing Floor Blues." This one is full of sorrowful blues, plenty of moaning and groaning, Lionel's violin literally cries...Baby this is THE blues. The other ten cuts are all originals by either Friedman or Bennight and have that same classic blues sound.

The Mad Dog Blues Duo Live at The End follows the same order as ***River City Roots***. It opens with "Harmonica Cadillac" (Friedman) - Mad Dog explains as a teen learning to play harp he would walk across town singing about how playing harmonica was a good way to get around. Next is "Shining Through" (Friedman / Fuller), a long slow grinder, a blues lover's song with so much feeling. Both musicians are at their finest. "A Train Blues" (Bennight) - in this one Sean takes over the vocals offering a different style than Mad Dog and it works well, adding some hokum to a sweet catchy tune. "Every Morning" (Friedman) has a nice Gypsy bounce to the guitar complimenting Mad Dog's steamy traditional harp sound. "Wet Dog" (Friedman) is one of my real favorites; it has that classic blues feeling with Mad Dog offering up his own version of the Muddy Waters sound complete with his 'blues growl.' Blues with a feeling. "Sweet Daddy" (Friedman) - the harmony between the two is perfection in the vocals, something they do so well throughout the session. That same harmony shines through between harmonica and guitar. "Rock On" (Bennight) - Sean's vocals are as sweet as his guitar. Amazing how he gets such sweet tone and gritty sound on his acoustic, just sweet picking with so much feeling. "Too Many Women Blues" (Friedman) is another favorite. In the middle of the tune Mad Dog takes off on a totally brilliant harp solo that is answered by Bennight's dazzling finger picking blues. "Holding the Bag Blues" (Friedman) - slow blues at its finest. Gritty, slow grinding blues about love lost. "Down So Long" (Bennight) is another one where Sean's voice compliments Mad Dog's harp so well. The spontaneous way they mesh their talents makes this live version magically sound like a new CD.

Overall, a pure gem. Sit down and have a listen of a couple true originals doing a down-home CD that will transport you to an old barn in the South in the 20s where folks have gathered to have a good old time drinking 'shine' and eating catfish and chicken while dancing to sweet hokum blues. This is the type of act that deserves to be standing on the finals stage at the IBC in Memphis.

NOTE: Live at The End was captured in 4K Video and may be viewed for free on YouTube at