

Mad Dog Blues

'Pinned Down by the Rain'

By Dan Willging

When you're a mad dog, not even the noonday sun can stop ya. The same holds for the Mad Dog Blues (MDB), an eclectic acoustic collective equipped with three acoustic guitarists, Sean Bennight, Big Willy Palmer, Mark Kaczorowski; a mandolinist, Jeff Becker; a bassist, Clark Chanslor, and fearless leader Mad Dog Friedman, harmonica. Hot on the heels of its sprawling double-disc *Family Blues 2020*, these guys go at it again with a lengthy digital-only release recorded live at six Front Range venues between July and December of 2021. Of these dozen tracks, five of the sextet wrote a prolific eight originals that make their recorded debut here.

Like *Family Reunion 2020*, *Pinned Down by the Rain* is not a fast, easy listen but requires time to digest its depth and intricacies. Case in point – “Hear Me Crying” starts mournfully slow but reaches its zenith with copious guitar flat-picking and spry mandolin action that could almost be lifted from a Grateful Dead jam. “Down So Long” features splendid flat-picking and bustling activity between all instruments. It’s a frequent pattern heard throughout these tracks – tight interplay between soloists who dart in and out unobtrusively.



Palmer’s “Working For Uncle Sam,” perhaps the most socially meaningful, pays homage to our nation’s veterans. The tune is predicated on a haunting guitar line as Palmer sings about a soldier’s thoughts about war life and eventually returning home. Also, a highlight is Bennight’s “Pinned Down by the Rain,” that’s quite mystical and poetic in nature.

MDB closes out with a ferocious 13:47 rendition of “Never Lost Love,” a song found on its debut *Happy Dance* recorded live on KGNU’s Kabaret and Friedman’s predecessor band, Papa Juke, from *Out of the Blue*.

Since it is a series of self-recorded live performances, you’ll hear various tone differences in the vocal mics and other imperfections. Still, it’s an honest, undoctored representation of MDB’s live shows.

While MDB works within a loose country blues framework - where else would you hear a Native American flute in the mix – the collective maintains its signature that makes it distinct along the Front Range blues scene.