

Mad Dog Blues

"Hug with our Heart"

EP Review
Self Published
By Jack Grace

It's not often that a band releases new music so soon after the unveiling of a 24 track album (Family Reunion, October 15, 2020). Yet, sometimes songs are written that need to be heard in the context of the era in which they were created. Certainly bewildering times such as the ones we reside in now call for musical expression to soothe and help guide us through them. The first two songs on the soon to be released acoustic three song EP, Hug with Our Heart, from Mad Dog Blues reach out to these unsettled times. The songs, "Hug with Our Heart" and "We Gotta Change", were presented to the full band after a live online concert. Within an hour, the group learned to play them, took them to heart, and recorded them. The third song, an extended version of "It's Raining on My Chickens", is one of the band's most popular songs. It was added as a tasty treat. Let's give them a listen ...

"Hug with Our Heart". The song was co-written by Mad Dog Friedman and Jenn Cleary. Friedman also does the vocals. It opens with Big Willy Palmer strumming the acoustic guitar, Jeff Becker's mandolin sounding like a cat scratching at the door to come in, and Mad Dog Friedman playing a fluttering harmonica. The song is full of

haunting images. Best line is, "division will crush us if we don't act soon." Friedman's voice cracks with emotion throughout but especially when singing the chorus: "Though we've been apart, it's time to realize ... We smile with our eyes, and hug with our heart." By the end, Becker's mandolin sounds like raindrops and we are singing along with the chorus. Well done!

"We Gotta Change". This one was written by Big Willy Palmer. It's a slow acoustic blues number where Palmer handles the vocals and Friedman, the soulful bluesy harmonica. The last two lines of the chorus are my favorite: "Together we're always better. It starts by reaching out your hand." Good advice that we definitely do not follow enough. There is a round of solos after each chorus; Mad Dog Friedman on the harmonica, Jeff Becker on mandolin, and Sean Bennight on acoustic guitar. All done sweetly and succinctly.

"It's Raining on My Chickens". Mad Dog Friedman cranks out the vocals and "chicken" harmonica on this bluesy lament. He begins by wailing a good long, "well ... it's raining on my chickens, ain't gonna get no eggs today." Jeff Becker adds some "chicken pickin'" mandolin along the way. This one gives all the players a chance to stretch out and play some down home blues. Mad Dog's harmonica highlights shine all the way through. This is one of those blues songs that sings about something sad but somehow leaves us feeling good. No wonder it's a crowd favorite. There is a concept in evolutionary biology called "parapatric speciation". I claim absolutely zero expertise in this field but my understanding is that it addresses species that are spread out over a large geographic area (like the blues). The species could mate with any other member but individuals only mate with those in their own geographic region. The result is a species that adapts to its immediate environment and is different from those evolved in other environments. I see a similar analogy in music. One can listen to bluegrass music all over the world but is it the same as the bluegrass music originating in Eastern Tennessee or Western North Carolina? Nope. It could be better or worse or just different. Same with country blues in Colorado. Is it the same as Delta Blues? Nope. But it incorporates the best of blues played elsewhere and adds its own unique twists. 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. The electronic EP releases on January 11, 2021. Go to www.coloradocountryblues.com for more information.

