

TEX RUBINOWITZ & BOB NEWSCASTER

The Old Man Mississippi

Patuxent/No Club Records



Even if you've wondered what rock 'n' roll would sound like played in a Dixieland style, I'm confident you've never heard many recordings like this one. Tex Rubinowitz is a veteran rockabilly roller well-known through the mid-Atlantic region for having managed to create a few minor hits in the 1980s, like "I'm Feeling Right Tonight." Not a whole lot has been heard from ol' Tex in the intervening

years until this iconoclastic venture, something the wide world of music could never have expected.

With the 16 songs here, Tex and his band mates (some 14 of them) render material that blends rockabilly, country, and Dixieland tropes that are dusted here and there with guitar licks by Bill Kirchen and Bob Margolin and Tex's longtime consort Bob Newscaster. Throughout, they keep

a nice easygoing tempo that suits the mostly original material. Throw in a few traditional songs – “What’s The Matter With The Mill?” or “St. James Infirmary” – done in a most untraditional manner and a supremely listenable and distinctive tapestry emerges. Tex has a natural *basso profundo* vocal range which he employs most times, but also a tremorous bass that he uses to punctuate a tune. That and the occasional yodel. Yes, yodeling, likely inspired by Jimmy “The Brakeman” Rodgers, whose “Brakeman’s Blues” also appears here. Of course, Tex delivers it in his own distinctive styling. There’s also a cover of “Trying To Get To You,” originally recorded during the 1950s by The Eagles (no, not *those* Eagles) practically in Tex’s backyard, Washington, D.C. (Elvis also had a few whacks at this one, too.)

What appeals most to me are the Dixieland riffs and flourishes – you’ll hear brassy trumpets, trombones, clarinets plus some mandolin, accordion, and pedal steel guitar – all oozing New Orleans sensibilities. Some tracks remind me of Pee Wee Russell and, as in the song “I Dreamed I Heard Buddy Bolden Play,” Buddy Bolden. Bix Beiderbecke also gets props in “The Sweetest Sound,” wherein the specific sweet sound according to Tex, “is like a pretty girl saying Yes.” Get this one and take it for a few spins. I’ll be darned if you don’t see Buddy and Bix, too.

– M.E. Travaglini