



Pure Pleasure LST 35002

Canned Heat & John Lee Hooker: Hooker 'n Heat

Format: 2LPs 33rpm / gatefold sleeve

Release date: 15.09.2009

When this two-LP set was initially released in January 1971, Canned Heat was back to its R&B roots. Sporting a slightly revised personnel with the return of Henry 'Sunflower' Vestine and the incorporation of Antonio 'Tony' de la Barreda on bass, a highly skilled constituent of Aldolfo de la Parra on drums. Sadly, it would also be the final effort to include co-founder Alan 'Blind Owl' Wilson, who passed away in September 1970. Hooker 'n Heat (1971) is a low-key affair split between unaccompanied solo John Lee Hooker tunes, collaborations between Hooker and Wilson, as well as five full-blown confabs between Hooker and Heat.

The full-fledged collaborations shine as both parties unleash some of their finest respective work. While Canned Heat get top bill — probably as it was the group's record company that sprung for Hooker 'n Heat — make no mistake, as Hooker steers the combo with the same gritty and percussive guitar leads that have become his trademark. The epic "Boogie Chillen No. 2" stretches over 11-and-a-half minutes and is full of the same swagger as the original, with the support of Canned Heat igniting the verses and simmering on the subsequent instrumental breaks with all killer and no filler.

Canned Heat are hands down the best back-up band John Lee Hooker has recorded. And despite the cover billing, they are very much a back-up group, for this is really a John Lee Hooker album, and one of his best in a long while.

Much of the credit goes to the Heat's planning and programming. They have caught Hooker in a variety of settings: soloist in his own

characteristic idiom; playing a fantastic series of duets with the late Al Wilson; and fronting the entire band (minus Hite, who worked on the project, and spread his infectious good humor, from the control booth) for some righteous, raunchy boogie. Canned Heat have made no secret of the fact that their entire boogie series, spread over some three albums, draws its inspiration from Hooker's work, so the combination is a natural. The second album in this two-record set is given over to band numbers, and it's the best of the two. Mention should be made of the earth-moving power of Antonio de la Barra and Adolfo de la Parra, the Heat's south-of-the-border rhythm section, and of the engineering, which may still be a little too clean for Hooker, but then, nobody records in barns anymore. Hooker fans are going to dig this record, and so are Heat fans, and that includes a lot of people. Let 'em boogie!

Recording: May 1970 at Liberty Studios, Los Angeles, by Dino Lappas
Production: Skip Taylor & Robert Hite Jr "Hooker 'n Heat" - John Lee Hooker (g, voc); Alan Wilson (p, hca); Henry Vestine (g); Antonio de la Barra (b); Adolfo de la Parra (dr)