

Mp3 Gurf Morlix - Last Exit To Happyland



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Folk Blues Songwriter 10 MP3 Songs in this album (46:29) ! Related styles: FOLK: Folk Blues, BLUES: Folk-Blues Details: Tempting as it may be, don't just judge Gurf Morlix by the company he keeps, even if it does provide a fine starting point: eminent musical artists like Lucinda Williams, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Warren Zevon, Ian McLagan, Patty Griffin, Robert Earl Keen, Michael Penn, Buddy Miller, Mary Gauthier, Tom Russell, Jim Lauderdale and Slaid Cleaves, to name but a few. Instead, listen to Last Exit to Happyland, his fifth solo album, and understand why his blue-ribbon associations as a producer, guitarist and multi-instrumentalist have led Morlix to a similar level of excellence as a singer, songwriter and artist in his own right. As critic Henry Cabot Beck notes on Amazon.com, "If anybody is still looking for a candidate to replace Robbie Robertson in The Band, look no further. Morlix can write, sing, produce, and play nearly every instrument (mostly stringed) and has a bottomless (albeit muddy) range of American musical idioms from which to draw." Through more than four decades of professional music endeavors, Morlix has distinguished himself with his innate musicality, exquisite taste, keen creative instincts, and well-honed ear for not only songwriting but also the elements that bring songs to their fullest fruition. And now, on Last Exit to Happyland, "I've found my voice, and my albums just keep getting better and better all the time," Morlix says. "I'm really proud of these songs and this album." The album is a showcase for Morlix's gifts as a musician and producer as well as his finest moment yet as a writer and singer. He plays everything on it but the drums, which are ably handled by Rick Richards, who has manned the kit on many of Morlix's productions in recent years. Icing the cake are Patty Griffin, Barbara K (of Timbuk 3 fame) and rising Texas singing sensation Ruthie Foster, who contribute harmony vocals to a number of tracks. As with all that Morlix has produced and played over the years, every note and creative touch ultimately serves the songs. And his trademark grit, soulfulness and authenticity suffuse the album,

representing the "muddy," as Morlix calls the junction where the varied strains of American roots music meet and mingle, at its truest and finest. Last Exit to Happyland is peopled with characters "headed to reckoning day," as Morlix sings in the propulsive opener, "One More Second." The swampy bomp of "Walkin' to New Orleans" finds a Crescent City resident heading home into the deadly wind and rain of Hurricane Katrina, while the haunting country-blues "Crossroads" reveals new wrinkles in Robert Johnson's fateful meeting with the devil. Whether it's longtime lovers at the "End of the Line," a traveler on a "Hard Road" or an outcast who laments "I Got Nothin'," Morlix captures their emotional essence. "Drums From New Orleans" takes listeners back to the radio signals that inspired Morlix as a youngster, and he pays tribute to his late friend and musical cohort Blaze Foley also the subject of Williams' "Drunken Angel" on "Music You Mighta Made," which echoes Foley's musical and songwriting style. On "She's a River," a beloved woman becomes a wonder of nature. And the stark "Voice of Midnight" examines life's final moments in a perfect grace note to a collection of songs that compares favorably to any other created by the many artists who have called on Morlix to help them make the most of their music. Prior to embarking on his own career, Morlix was likely best-known for his 11-year creative partnership with Lucinda Williams as her guitarist, band leader and backing vocalist as well as the producer of two of her classic, critically-acclaimed albums: her 1988 breakthrough Lucinda Williams and 1992's Sweet Old World. His work with Williams led him to produce multiple recordings for Hubbard (four albums), Cleaves (three albums and an EP with a fourth album soon to be released) and two albums each with Keen and Gauthier, as well as discs by Russell, McLagan, Butch Hancock, Hot Club of Cowtown, The Setters (Alejandro Escovedo, Michael Hall and Walter Salas-Humara) and others. Morlix's varied musical activities include touring with Zevon, Penn and B.W. Stevenson, playing guitar in McLagan's Bump Band, and singing, playing and producing an album with the Imperial Golden Crown Harmonizers, a gospel collaborative of noted Austin talents. Among the many artists he has performed and recorded with are Eliza Gilkyson, Guy Clark, Emmylou Harris, Michelle Shocked, Robert Plant, Jimmy La Fave, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Mojo Nixon, Jerry Lee Lewis, Peter Case, Bob Neuwirth, Don Walser, Jon Langford, Steve Earle, Harry Dean Stanton, Syd Straw, Billy Swan, Charlie Sexton, Victoria Williams, James McMurtry, Sonny Landreth, Doyle Bramhall, Flaco Jimenez, Steve Forbert, Bill Kirchen, Lazy Lester, Rosanne Cash, David Byrne, Kevin Welch, C.C. Adcock, John Prine, Dave Alvin, to name some but hardly all. Music captured Morlix's imagination from a very early age growing up in Buffalo, New

York, as he soaked up the many sounds to be found on the airwaves. On hearing the Everly Brothers singing "Cathy's Clown" for the first time, Morlix found his mission in life. "It was like, 'That's what I want to do!' It was earth-shattering music to me, really amazing." After seeing the Beatles make their U.S. debut on "The Ed Sullivan Show," his fate was sealed. Starting out on bass and moving to guitar, Morlix was playing professionally by his mid-teens (his longtime friend Peter Case made his stage debut between sets by Morlix's band). Mastering new sounds and new instruments became a lifelong pursuit when he heard the steel guitar on Bob Dylan's "Lay Lady Lay" he got himself one and then joined a country band to learn how to play it. The band members turned him on to country icons like Hank Williams and Lefty Frizzell, who remain indelible influences. By the time Morlix finished high school and struck out to play music in such warmer climes as, first, Key West, and then in 1975, Austin, Texas, he had a rich musical vocabulary that included rock, country, blues, folk and R&B, and a growing yen to create music in a place where all of them met and intermingled. During his first stint in Texas, dividing his time between Austin and Houston, Morlix played in a band with kindred souls Buddy and Julie Miller, toured with Stevenson (known for his hits "My Maria" and "Shambala"), worked with Texas cult legend Foley, and made his recorded debut playing bass on Eric Taylor's Shameless Love album. In 1981, he moved to Los Angeles and fell in with neo-country and roots artists like Dwight Yoakam, Lauderdale and the Millers, and also finally met Williams, who had played the same circuit as Morlix in Texas. He also toured with Zevon and Penn (and can be heard playing steel guitar on Penn's Free for All album), briefly reunited with Case as a member of The Plimsouls (and also sang on Case's solo debut), and recorded four tracks with Jerry Lee Lewis for the Great Balls of Fire soundtrack album. In 1991 Morlix returned to Texas, settling into a house outside Austin where he installed his Rootball studio at the end of the 1990s. In addition to offering his production clients a comfortable place to make their records, having the home studio led Morlix to start making albums of his own. He'd been writing songs for years, and holding his creations to the same high standards set by the songs of those he worked with. As the '90s came to a close he finally felt he had a strong enough set of songs to strike out on his own. "I had the studio, so everybody started asking me: Well, when are you going to make a record? Then Buddy Miller made his first record [on which Morlix played guitar, bass, sang and co-wrote a song], so I made one," he explains. In between sessions at Rootball with his clients on which he produces, engineers, masters and plays a range of instruments, Morlix cut his first solo release, Toad of Titicaca, in 2000. The Austin Chronicle hailed it as "a fine solo

debut," and noted music journalist John Morthland greeted it as "an eclectic yet seamless set, full of pleasures and surprises both large and small" on Amazon.com. With his debut and each album to follow, critics and listeners who had noted the quality and integrity of Morlix's work with other talents greeted his emergence with enthusiasm. Fishin' in the Muddy in 2002 was dubbed "a romper stomper" by the Austin Chronicle, while All Music Guide found it "hypnotic in its shambolic, loose-wound, grooving glory." Morlix's love for gutbucket C&W and honky-tonk informed his third release in 2004, Cut 'N Shoot, which All Music Guide praised as "a solid country record, stripped to the rag and bone shop of the heart, and full of broken love songs [with the] requisite irony, humor, and a gritty, honest approach that is sorely missing from almost all country records these days." Growing ever more secure with stepping out front as a writer and singer, he released the "splendid, moving collection" (Austin Chronicle) Diamonds To Dust in 2007, which led critic Richard Skanse to observe on CD Baby that "Morlix should henceforth be regarded as nothing less than one of the most compelling and formidable songwriters in his adopted home state of Texas, if not in all Americana music." And now with Last Exit to Happyland, Morlix rightly feels he has come into his own as an artist, songwriter and performer. "I'm really enjoying writing songs, making my records, and going out and playing," he notes. His ever-expanding touring circuit has already taken him across North America and to Europe and Japan. Morlix will of course continue to produce and play with others, but finally adding his own voice to the chorus of great American music is a welcome (if not long overdue) move. For as Skanse rightly notes on CD Baby, "more Morlix, as any Gurf connoisseur can tell you, can only be one thing: cool."

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