

Mp3 John-alex Mason - Live Fire



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Newest by Best Emerging Artist at King Biscuit Festival 2004. Raw Country Blues. Hill country stomping with Delta Sliding. Covers of Fred McDowell, Furry Lewis, Rainie Burnette, Robert Johnson combined with award winning originals. 10 MP3 Songs

BLUES: Delta Style, BLUES: Acoustic Blues

Details: "My parents tell a story where they say that I was whistling before I could talk," said acoustic bluesman John-Alex Mason. "Singing came naturally to me. It was not ever anything that I was ashamed of. It doesn't necessarily always have to sound good - the more you do it, the better you get at it." Mason, who grew up hearing his African-American godmother Viola Marigna singing Baptist moans and gospel tunes juxtaposed with his older brother's love of the Allman Brothers and Grateful Dead, found guitar in his teens, though he didn't pursue music as a vocation in earnest until after college. "I had a great job in Germany, but I was having a lot more fun playing music on the street and making money doing that," he said. "I'd been to a few open mics and sat in with friends when they needed an extra guitar player but I wasn't really happy with any of it. I had studies, but once I got to Germany I knew that it was time to choose. I quit my job after six months." Harnessing the intensity and purity of pre-World War II with more contemporary sensibilities, including elements of Taj Mahal and Curtis Mayfield, Mason quickly garnered praise for his unique approach to the blues, winning the 2001 Crossroads Acoustic Blues Competition at the Telluride Blues Festival and eventually landing an endorsement deal with National Reso-Phonic guitars. Mason was also named as the most promising emerging artist at the 2004 King Biscuit Festival in Helena, AR. He also shared bills with guitar greats such as Jimmie Vaughn, Robben Ford and John Mayall, all gigs that helped him earn a reputation as a must-see live performer, one who doesn't rely on cheap shtick to win audiences over. "There's the aspect of being an entertainer and entertaining the audience at all costs and then there's the aspect of being an artist and musician and, for instance, in

Europe there's a respect for the artist side," he said. "It's entertaining to watch someone who's obviously talented sing and play - that's the entertainment. I don't want to generalize about audiences in the United States, it wouldn't be fair to do that, but there's this idea that there's a 30 second attention span and if you're not continually setting off flames on stage, then something else is going to attract people's attention." With live performances being such a large part of Mason's artistic existence it seems only natural that he would record a live album, something he was aware of as he sat down to work on Live Fire. Recorded live in Seattle the album, he said, lacks tentative feelings: "The hardest thing about making studio records is having where I'm at with my singing and guitar playing translate. The Time Will Come record [his last studio effort] came as close to a true sound as I have yet. It's easy when you're in a studio to not let things flow and sound as natural as they would in a live situation," he said, "So, the extreme case of that is to do a live album." Eschewing overdubs Live Fire capitalizes on the spirit of spontaneity that Mason has tried to capture in his studio efforts. "I don't feel comfortable messing around with the performances once they come through," he said By Jedd Beaudoin

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