

Mp3 Orville Johnson - Freehand



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An eclectic trip thru American Roots music featuring the distinctive vocals and dobro of Orville Johnson. 10 MP3 Songs BLUES: Acoustic Blues, FOLK: Folk Pop Details: Orville Johnson's powerful and sensitive vocals and rip-it-up dobro and guitar playing make for a CD that will be hard to get out of your player. Guests Mike Auldridge and Stacy Phillips and a roster of superb bandmates make this album essential. Roots66says: Illinois-born and Washington-state dweller Orville Johnson has a long history of music-making. He has appeared on over one hundred recordings and been a guest on such programs as Prairie Home Companion. Along with his friend and fellow recording artist, Mark Graham, he is one of the self-annointed Kings of Mongrel Folk and ruler of Mongrolia (check out the web site mongrelfolk.com/ for the tongue-in-cheek details). He certainly is King of the Dobro and various other instruments. Johnson has not only the experience but the musical talent to successfully pull off such an eclectic assembly of music as this recording Freehand. The selections range from Bernstein/Sondheim to the Rolling Stones to John Hartford to Brazilian-influenced tunes to a couple of his own compositions. The accompanying musicians are excellent, the arrangements are effective, and the result is very pleasing to the ear. Johnson starts off with Imitation of the Blues, providing a very good vocal in addition to his instrumental work. The Dobro Rhumba is just that-a fun rhumba featuring two Dobros, expertly played by Johnson and Stacy Phillips, while Will Dowd is kept very busy with percussion duties. The pace slows down with "Somewhere", a beautifully-rendered instrumental of the Bernstein-Sondheim classic from "West Side Story". You Are the One is a very nice, poetic love ballad with a Latin-tinged flavor. The Brazilian-influenced instrumental, A Lua do Amazonia, shows off not only Johnson's Dobro but also Jovino Santos Neto's jazzy piano and Mark Ivester's drums, all anchored by the steady bass of Rob Moitoza. Very nice. Bill Monroe's Rocky Road Blues has Johnson back with a strong vocal turn on this

classic where he's joined by Mike Auldridge on Dobro. Through the magic of over-dubbing, Johnson does everything on *As Tears Go By*, a quiet tune by The Rolling Stones. *Yazoo City Jail* is a prison story told by the one-time cellmate of a condemned man. Taking a turn at composition, Johnson includes his wry instrumental, *Waggy Tail*, ably supported by Ron Weinstein on organ, Craig Flory on flute, and the aforementioned Rob Moitoza on bass and Will Dowd on drums. Johnson has a nice vocal outing with the late, great John Hartford's philosophical *Today*, which winds up this excellent album. Orville Johnson is a man of many musical talents: instrumentalist, vocalist, songwriter, arranger, and producer. It's been four years since his last album. This album, *Freehand*, is an wonderful opportunity to experience these talents in full display. He has an eclectic musical vocabulary and knows how to pick excellent supporting talent to realize his musical conceptions. The result is a very satisfying album worthy of many rehearsals. Highly recommended. *Minor7thMagazinesays*: Three songs into *Freehand*, Orville Johnson turns in an absolutely jaw-dropping, marvelous instrumental version of *Somewhere*. As he coaxes and caresses his dobro, he evokes every love-ache emotion you've ever felt, starting with the Sharks and the Jets and then roller-coasting right into what happened in your dreams last night. When you hear Johnson's version of this "West Side Story" tune, you'll feel compelled to grab whomever is next to you and say, "Listen, please, just listen". With some understated guitar help from John Knowles, Johnson simply nails this one to the wall. I haven't heard anything quite so affecting since I heard Brother Oswald Kirby's *End of the World* quite a few years back. The rest of this fascinating CD registers all over the board, with half the tracks being instrumentals. *Imitation of the Blues* features a vibraphone(!) and Johnson's strong and unaffected country voice with a bluegrassy uptempo. Mexican-style horn arrangements pop up here and there, as does Mike Auldridge on a bouncy version of Bill Monroe's *Rocky Road Blues*. Johnson's own -- and only -- composition here, *Waggy Tail*, sounds like a theme song for a 1960s TV show for kids, with flute, organ and bass. *A Lua do Amazonia* features a bossa nova guitar and jazz piano. Even though Johnson shows his soft side again on a very nice slide guitar version of the Rolling Stones' *As Tears Go By*, he's happy -- even joyous -- to mix it up with his able bandmates. Though an odd assortment, these performances ring true. Rare and fun. *Vintage Guitar* says: Orville Johnson falls under the folk umbrella the way that Doc Watson does; he's more interpreter than writer and he, too, is a master instrumentalist-although, instead of flatpicking, Dobro is his forte'. *Freehand* (on his own MongrelFolk label) is an eclectic collection, running the gamut from Latin jazz to Bill Monroe's "Rocky Road Blues",

both played on the dobro- the latter featuring Johnson trading licks with the legendary Mike Auldridge. Similarly, Josh Graves' appropriately titled "Dobro Rhumba" turns into a duet with Dobro great Stacy Phillips. On a beautiful reading of "Somewhere" from West Side Story, Johnson's lyrical Dobro is backed only by John Knowles' guitar accompaniment, while Orville supplies all the instruments on the Stones "As Tears Go By". The quirky swing instrumental "Waggy Tail" is the Seattle artist's sole original, and only half of the CD's 10 songs are vocals. With a mellow voice that is also reminiscent of Doc Watson, Johnson's singing is icing on an already rich cake. And a very tasty one at that. Dirty Linen says: Dobro player Orville Johnson is an integral part of the bluegrass and folk scenes of the Pacific NW, in multiple roles including instrumentalist, producer, teacher, and singer/songwriter. His latest solo disc is an apt reflection of his diverse talents, including country blues ("Imitation of the Blues"), breezy Latin jazz ("A Lua do Amazonia"), and covers of tunes by Bill Monroe, John Hartford, and even the Rolling Stones (a sensitive dobro version of "As Tears Go By"). The roster of guest musicians, which includes Laura Love, Jo Miller, Stacy Phillips, and Mike Auldridge provides substantial support, but it is clearly Johnson's show, and he impresses as vocalist, instrumentalist, arranger, and composer (the bouncy jazz-country hybrid "Waggy Tail"). Sing Out! says: If you're weary of ultra-serious singer-songwriters or mediocre guitar pickers, relax a spell with Orville Johnson. He wrote only one of the ten songs on this CD, but he plays dobro, guitar, mandolin, steel guitar, bass and percussion in various combinations on all of them. A number of friends sit in on those and a few other instruments such as piano, sax, organ, synth and flute. Jo Miller and Laura Love add harmony vocals on a trio of tracks. Even when his friends pitch in full tilt, the star of the show remains Johnson and his flashy fingers. He also sings on a few tracks with a pleasant voice that's a bit warmer than another famous guitarist known for joking about his voice. In fact, "You Are the One" by Ron Bailey sounds like something Kottke or Bromberg might record. Throughout, the CD sounds like Johnson is having fun, which after a few tracks becomes infectious. It's hard to beat the diversity of repertoire on this CD, which includes compositions from Leonard Bernstein, Bill Monroe, Don Nix, Keith Richards and John Hartford among others. "Dobro Rhumba" by Josh Graves will keep you perking followed by "Somewhere" which will leave you melancholy as surely as when you saw "West Side Story". Johnson is a talented, versatile, serious musician who sounds serious about music being entertainment, sort of serious fun. Victory Music Review says: When singers and musicians say that there are great reasons to record their CDs in the Pacific Northwest, one of the most-often cited great reasons

is named Orville Johnson. Playing so many instruments with passionate flair and originality that he seems to have forgotten to name the banjo on the liner notes for this release (but he remembered vocals, dobro, guitars, mandolin, percussion, bass and steel guitar), Orville can add texture and wonder to just about any music style. His favorite, of course, is roots-based, yet this CD covers a tremendous amount of ground. A wonderful vocal song, Imitation of the Blues, opens the set (with the easily overpowering voices of Jo Miller and Laura Love here and elsewhere in the set, raising the temperature of the tune). A nearly goofy instrumental, Dobro Rhumba, follows, with Stacy Phillips adding a second dobro and Will Dowd nailing the percussion. The Bernstein chestnut, Somewhere, played in duet with John Knowles on guitar, creates a dreamy, atmospheric mood that is quickly challenged by the tropical You Are the One. This is followed by a bossa nova, Bill Monroe's Rocky Road Blues, and then the familiar Jagger-Richards oldie As Tears Go By. You get the point. Nothing stands still here; the musical ideas are all over the map, constantly challenging and delighting the listener. This is a set that you cannot help but love, and it could easily take up long term residence on your CD player. FolkWorks Magazine says: ... arguably the best dobro player in America...His remarkable singing voice is only surpassed by his instrumental prowess.

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