

MICHAEL LANDAU - *MLG LIVE*

Most everyone has heard Mike Landau's tasteful guitar work many times over on countless major record releases. From his more ambient, textural work on Joni Mitchell records to his soulful complement to James Taylor's tunes, Mike always leaves his original sonic footprint bringing the artists' composition to the next level. Mike is one of the few session players who gets hired to sound completely like himself. He is a producer's dream session guy, in that he will always play the right part, in the right place with proper impact while never getting in the way of the vocal performance. Oh and his tones...

Mike is also a tremendous writer and performer. He has released various records with his bands Burning Water and the Raging Honkies, showcasing his talents as a writer and producer, truly in his element. All are wonderful recordings and should be mandatory listening for every guitarist. He has also released 2 amazing solo albums.

To truly appreciate Mike's gift, he must be seen in a live setting. His live sound is just so amazing. There is so much behind what is coming out of those speaker cabinets. Mike's dynamic delivery flows from gentle release to a flaming inferno of intensity. There is so much depth to Mike as a player and as a person. His latest release, *The Michael Landau Group - Live*, does a great job capturing the range of his solo and group work and is a requisite CD for every guitar players collection. "Live" is an amalgam of blues tunes, jazzier numbers and some rock tunes as well. The heavier tunes live on the 1st CD and the 2nd CD has the more mellow tunes. The *Double Live* CD was recorded between 2004 and 2006 at the Baked Potato in N. Hollywood, CA and includes a roster of heavy hitting musicians such as, Toss Panos, Ronald Bruner Jr. and Gary Novak on drums; Jimmy Johnson and Chris Roy on bass; Scott Kinsey on keys and Chuck Kavooras plays slide on one song.

The CD opens with a fantastic rendering of "Worried Life Blues" with Mike delivering some rapid fire blues licks right out of the gate. His finger style dynamics and attack are beautiful on this track leading us in to "The Sun" which is a fuzzed out rocker. The Sun is not short on attitude with Mike's lazy, I don't care, but I might want to rip your head off vocal delivery. Mike slinks through some cool changes in the solo with some very cool rhythmic phrasing, blistering licks, tremolo work and wah wah. "A Peaceful Ride" brings us some interesting social commentary and some great slide work from Chuck. Next is one of my favorite tracks on disc 1, "Underwear". "Underwear" first appeared on the Raging Honkies CD, *Boner*. Here we get a killer half time version with a some delicious tremolo work. One of Mike's greatest assets is his tasteful use of effects. Next up is 6/8 Blues, which features some nice Strat finesse with the occasional flurry of left field licks. *Born in the Rain* closes disc one with some major heavy blues attitude.

Disc 2 is filled with wonderful arrangements, delicate phrasing and more spaciousness ranging from the jazzier "the Might SB" to the Holdsworthian "Ghouls and Goblins", which has beautiful chord voicing and a whacky falling off the cliff sounding solo. *Widow* is a very Dreamy tune with a cool, sleepy vocal leading us to "Johnny Swing" from

Mike's first solo CD, "Tales From the Bulge". I have always loved this tune and here we get a stretched out version with some great bass and keyboard work and, of course, Mike's brilliant guitar playing. "Good Friend" is a home run all around. Really nice vocal, great guitar work, nice keyboard atmosphere and rock solid drumming. The last track, "Untitled", is a very nice bookend to this absolutely fabulous live CD!

Whether you are a fan of Mike or haven't heard him, you must own this CD! "The Michael Landau Group Live" is a pretty comprehensive representation of what Mike's playing is all about. The CD has great compositions, performances and is recorded very well. And let's not forget his glorious guitar tone!!

Mark Williams