

Mason Ruffner – Live

1. Bourbon St. Bang:

Recorded in 1984 at The Old Absinthe Bar in New Orleans. Mike Stocktons on bass and Willie Cole on drums. This was recorded one year prior to Mason's first album release, and shows clearly that Mason has his feet squarely under him as a blues guitarist. Great drums and bass by Mike and Willie.

2. Keep On Holdin' On:

Recorded in 1984 at Tipitina's in New Orleans. Mike Stockton on bass, Willie Cole on drums and Chris Clifton on 2nd guitar. Mason delivers some fine lyrics here, backed by great guitar and a superb rhythm section, and though this song appears on his "You Can't Win" CD, this live version is the "One".

3. Baby, I Don't Care No More:

Recorded in Aug. of 1986 at Antone's in Austin, Tx. Chris Clifton on 2nd guitar, Sarah Brown on bass and Wes Starr on drums. This live version precedes the version recorded in the studio for Gypsy Blood, and is one of Masons' best. Bob Dylan praised Mason and quoted lyrics from this tune in his book, Chronicles Vol. 1. This song is proof that Ruffner is one serious songwriter.

4. Ain't Nothin' But Trouble:

Recorded June of 1987 at Park West in Chicago, Ill. Chris Clifton on 2nd guitar, George Reiff on bass, Kevin Valentine on drums and Michael Ramos on keyboards. This was recorded when Mason started touring and playing for larger audiences. A classic example of 'blues meets rock', it resounds with authenticity.

5. Gamblin' Fever:

Recorded in Aug. 1989 at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles, Calif. Glen Fukunaga on bass and Roddy Colonna on drums. This was recorded when Mason was on tour with Ringo Starr. The influence of Jimi Hendrix can be heard in this explosive version of one of the finest songs from Mason's first CD.

6. Red Hot Lover.

Recorded in June of 1988 at the Nassau Coliseum in Long Island, N.Y. Glen Fukunaga on bass, Roddy Colonna on drums. Mason gets the guitar smokin' on this one and lets it fly. This was recorded while Mason was on tour with Jimmy Page.

7. Runnin':

Recorded in July of 1987 at The Summit in Houston, Tx. Chris Clifton on 2nd guitar, George Reiff on bass, Kevin Valentine on drums and Michael Ramos on keyboards. This track stays fairly close to the studio version released later that year, with the band doing a fine job of keeping things simple and tight.

8. Dancin' On Top OF The World:

Recorded Sept. of 1987 in Madrid, Spain. Chris Clifton on 2nd guitar, George Reiff on bass, Kevin Valentine on drums and Michael Ramos on keyboards. This has to be

the hardest rockin' tune on the disc, with Mason and the band taking off like a runaway train and not letting up until the last note. Explosive!

9. Serenata:

Recorded in July of 1992 at Club West in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Lou Delanoval on bass and Roddy Colonna on drums. This beautiful instrumental shows the touch of a true guitar master, with the violin sounds being produced by Mason turning the volume knob up and down on his Strat while simultaneously picking the strings. Gorgeously lush, with classical overtones, this is one of the finest guitar-inspired instrumental pieces ever.

10. Loaded Down:

Recorded in 1991 at The Parodiso in Amsterdam, Holland
Jimmy Pettit on bass and Roddy Colonna on drums. Another burner, musically, and a fine example of thought-provoking lyrics as well; check out the final, plaintive verse as re the mean streets of America: "Call the doctor, call the police Pray for me mama, pray for peace If I die, please don't bury me Turn me into a giant condor, sailing by the sea"

11. Love Don't Love Nobody:

Recorded in Oct. 1999 at the Black Diamond on Beale St. in Memphis, In. Art Edmaiston on Sax, Mark Franklin on trumpet, Paul Taylor on bass and Earl Lowe on drums. Here we find Mason with a horn section reminiscent of the glory days of Sax. Mason's guitar digs into the rhythm, ala Albert King.

12. Gypsy Blood:

Recorded in July of 1987 in Providence, R.I. Chris Clifton on 2nd guitar, George Reiff on bass, Kevin Valentine of drums and Michael Ramos on keyboards. Here it is, the song that brought him fame. This version stays close to the studio version, but with extra adrenaline. Though Mason has mentioned that this song isn't the easiest to get off the ground, you'd never guess it from listening to this as he and the band hit their groove and keep rockin' steady straight through.

13. Courage:

Recorded in May of 1991 at the Cruise Cafe in Oslo, Norway. Jimmy Pettit on bass and Roddy Colonna on drums. This song is one of rock's greatest guitar instrumentals. The live version here cooks at the boil-over point, delivering all the fire Mason's fans have come to expect from his live shows.

This compilation of live recordings by Mason Ruffner show a consummate artist who breaks out of the mold with music that's a blend of blues and rock, but with a decidedly soulful bent. Though he rocks hard enough to knock your socks off, his playing is also funky and rhythmic, the kind of music that makes you get up and move. Ruffner's musical influences run from Albert King to Jimi Hendrix, as well as lesser-known artists in the blues genre. His compositions are incomparable; haunting guitar melodies woven on his vintage Stratocaster. Just listen to the instrumental piece Serenata to get the full effect of this (watch out, it'll carry you away). The inspiration for Mason's lyrics are even more varied; drawing on his love of the French Symbolist

poets like Rimbaud and Baudelaire, while digging deep into the underbelly of the human condition with pathos and understanding, his lyrics reflect an artist intent on telling it like it is, much as Bob Dylan (who's influenced Mason greatly) has always done. Ruffner's lyrics are ironic, at times bitter, but wisely hip: What you'd expect from an outlaw of the music business. With the release of Gypsy Blood, he was poised on the brink of stardom but Mason did what most would deem unthinkable, he walked away. He simply didn't have it in him to Feed the "star-making machine". He wanted to make music his own way rather than try to make it in the music biz. That pretty much sums up the level of integrity of this singer/songwriter/guitarist. His devotion is to what drives him: the music.

Mark McDade 05/18/05