

BLINDED BY SOUND

Rich DelGrosso & Jonn Del Toro Richardson - Time Slips On By

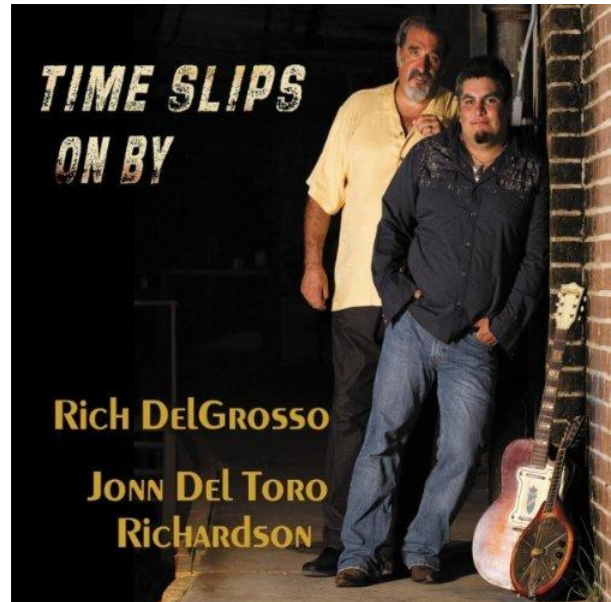
Time Slips On By teams Texas blues veterans Rich DelGrosso and Jonn Del Toro Richardson and it is in every sense a collaboration as both men sing lead, take center stage for solos with their instruments (mandolin and guitar, respectively), and share a near-equal split of the songwriting duties. Democracy can sometimes make for messy, disjointed albums but a real generosity of spirit and shared sense of their roots make this a winning team.

I don't make statements like this lightly – particularly in January – but the title track is a Song Of The Year candidate. Richardson's vocal is sweeter than honey and would be enough to recommend this track on its own, but there's so much more. Richardson takes a brief, tasteful solo which is followed by some fancy mandolin picking from DelGrosso. The added horn section accents put it over the top.

Richardson's smooth voice is a nice contrast to the gruffer growl of DelGrosso, whose voice has traces of Johnny Winter and Billy Gibbons, particularly echoing the latter on the opening track with some distortion added to the vocals. His best vocal might be on "She's Sweet," which also features some great harp from Sonny Boy Terry.

"Summertime is Here" is an ode to fun times enjoyed with good friends, food, and maybe just a few cold beverages. Rather than following the ZZ Top-Texas blueprint, Richardson and DelGrosso welcome the accordion of Joel Guzman. The result is still very Texas but plays more to the Latin tradition of a Los Lobos instead. Richardson's vocal is again a vital ingredient, singing with a hint of nostalgia for summers gone by and anticipation of those to come.

The vocals are strong throughout the album but let's not forget both of these men are extraordinary players. There is a tendency among some players to extend each song to put that on display, sometimes weighing things down. DelGrosso and Richardson keep their songs lean and solos brief and added a pair of instrumentals to allow them to shine as musicians. They share the stage with the Texas Horns Horns (Mark Kazonoff, John



Mills, and Al Gomez) on "Where's Laura" while "Good Rockin' Johnny" is a lean boogie with some fancy picking.

Time Slips On By is a wonderful collection of good songs and great playing by two men capable of standing on their own as solo artists but in this instance two heads really are better than one. Let's hope they don't let too much time go by before they join forces again.

By Josh Hathaway