



Christopher Wyze & The Tellers: Live In Clarksdale (CD+DVD)

Big Radio Records

Towards the end of last year an album came through for review and it just stuck on my player, it was that good. A full interview with Christopher

Wyze soon followed for Blues In Britain and during our conversation, Christopher mentioned a new album he and the band had recorded live in Clarksdale, Mississippi in October, 2024.

And here it is: not only the promised live album, but also a full concert DVD, with a bonus, 50-minute documentary that includes a fascinating travelogue taking the viewer on a tour of Clarksdale and its suburbs, hosted by Wyze himself. The package is topped-off with an informative, 12-page booklet. The ten tracks were recorded on the Juke Joint Chapel stage at the Shack Up Inn, where folks like Charlie Musselwhite, Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram, Cedric Burnside and many others have performed before. It's a venue that takes you to the very heart of the Delta; small, not too polished, but clearly alive from the blues played there. Everything has a great live feel to it and the concert sound is superb. Wyze's expressive vocal and neat harmonica stand out front and John Boyle graces the band with both electric guitar and slide. On keyboards, there's Mark Yacovne, Douglass Banks on drums and Gerry Murphy on bass and backing vocals. The Tellers are Wyze's touring band and throughout they get every note and beat spot on.



The set contains eight of the thirteen tracks from Wyze's recent *Stuck In The Mud* studio release (reviewed in these pages), including the radio hit 'Back To Clarksdale', alongside a couple of blues classics from the 1920's. The cover of *Stuck In The Mud* portrayed a tractor stuck fast in the mud, but this time the motor's running smoothly. The deep, downhome *Stuck In The Mud* title track establishes the Oxford, Mississippi beat and just lets it lead the way: it's pure Delta magic, as is 'Hard Work Don't Pay'. The covers are Leroy Carr and 'Scrapper' Blackwell's 'How Long, How Long Blues' and 'Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out' - Wyze and two of his Tellers hail from Indianapolis, Indiana, the very city where Carr and Blackwell lived and died – and Wyze's introduction of *"You folks down here in the Delta might think we don't have the blues up in Indiana, but I can assure you, we do,"* is right on the money.

It took twenty years for Christopher to make one solo album and now he's followed up nine months later with another one that's already pencilled on my list as one of the best albums of 2025. This is a real blues gem of an album.

Pete Clack



BLUES IN BRITAIN