

Vintage Guitar Album Review Aug 2024 by Brett Adams (transcript)

Raw, primal simplicity. A laid-back rock beat that's rooted in country and blues. That's what vocalist/guitarist Benjamin delivers here, a variant of the Tulsa Sound pioneered by J.J. Cale and Leon Russell. In fact, some of these songs were recorded in Tulsa's restored The Church Studio, which housed Shelter Records, once owned by Russell.

Blessed with a husky, Billy Gibbons-style voice, Benjamin - who studied guitar with Junior Brown - lets his lean, mean Strat take center stage; his tone is thick with distortion ranging from light to buzzy, while acclaimed lap-steel player Jesse Aycock guests on seven of the 12 songs, pushing the groove to jammier heights.

"Undercover of Night" is a potent opener with Benjamin's mid-tempo riff and slowly funky shuffle. The hot title track includes shrieking slide and lap-steel harmony solos.

"Old Rock House" is another masterful shuffle, while "Chasm of Soul" is straightforward blues-rock. The jaw-dropper is "Local Honey" with its '80s-like synthesizer pulse, but there are clean solo bursts - think Stevie Ray Vaughan's sizzling licks on David Bowie's Let's Dance album.

Cross the Tulsa Sound with early ZZ Top, and that's the head-bobbin' swagger you'll find here. - Bret Adams