
ALIVE AT TWENTY FIVE

NO OTHER STIMULANTS REQUIRED *By Neal Vaughan*



Pick up an album titled '25Live' and you naturally feel that your about to experience a retrospective, a nod to past glory; a swan song of sorts. And, with most of the Ruben Hoeke Band's killer tracks packed into this double CD, 25 in all, you could see it that way. But this album is also a rasping fire breathing statement of future intent. It sounds totally 'now' and on the evidence of this recording the Ruben Hoeke band is powering forward. Pumping hard energy blues rock like they just hit the world's stage, a bunch of adrenalin pumped kids determined to impress and show what they've got.

25Live is very much ALIVE. In fact a large chunk of this album was recorded without the band's knowledge at the Poppodium Bolwerk in Sneek Holland in September 2017. Sound engineer Robin Schingenga knew they planned to record a live show in a few months so he thought he'd test things out. Secretly recording their entire gig. He only told the band that the metaphorical 'tape' had been running as they toweled off after their encore. The effect is magical. Pure unadulterated blues rock. Like a bootleg - but without the old cassette recorder stuffed in your anorak pocket sound issues. The boys ripped into their stuff like a punk band who'd just decided it was time for a sonic smash up, feeding off their audience, gorging themselves on Ruben's free flowing riffs and an uninhibited pounding beat from brother Eric on drums and Mike Kamp on bass. While Lucas put his voice into overdrive to match the guitar work , which is in parts as blistering as anything you might find on that the MC5's famed live album 'Kick out the Jams'.

Of course these guys ain't no punks - they produce immaculately manicured high end rock with carefully crafted songs that explore all of life's highs and lows - it's just that on this album you get to hear them before they clean under their finger nails. And as Ruben himself says this is the best way to hear this kind of music 'no overdubs, click tracks or voice correctors'. The result is some truly magical moments, the kind you remember from any great live show. For this listener Midnight Prayer, True Love , Gone But Not Forgotten, Soul of a Man and Give it Up conjure up that mystical feeling of a roots driven rock band taking you completely out of yourself into the cosmic stream of musical wonder. And that was achieved listening over my morning cup of tea - no other stimulants required. Which sums up the pure life force that jumps from the speakers when you spin this fab collection. 25 years, 25 tracks and another 25 to come.
