

# SMALL BLUES TRAP

In these uncertain times, listeners and musicians all over the world are reminded almost daily what it means to have the blues. Memphis, Chicago and New Orleans all lay claim to being the home of the blues but the music has spread throughout the world, far beyond the Mississippi Delta area that nurtured the origins of the genre.

Small Blues Trap is a quartet based out of several villages in the central Greece countryside. The band was formed in 2004 and consists Paul Karapiperis on lead vocals, harmonica, slide steel guitar and keyboards, Panagiotis Daras on lead and rhythm guitar. Lefteris Besios on bass and Stathis Evageliou on drums. Their lengthy list of influences is a “who’s who” of important blues innovators. The list also includes Tom Waits and Captain Beefheart, which isn’t surprising once you hear Karapiperis sing. His deep, thick, raspy voice certainly brings to mind both of these better-known singers.

Musically, Small Blues Trap uses blues as a foundation on this all-original set list, mixing in some rock and a few jazz influences to create a unique approach that avoids the pitfall of trying to sound like a traditional blues band. They may use a standard boogie guitar riff on “It Took Me a Long Time” but the cut gets a boost from Karapiperis, who whips off a lightning-quick harp solo before Daras lays down a equally fine guitar solo. “It’s True” uses a shuffle beat as the band describes their love for blues music despite being so far from the land where it started. Daras shines on lead guitar on “The World is Painted Blue Again”, his clean tone dominating the proceedings. The title track is a darker track with an arrangement that emphasizes Daras on acoustic guitar. Musically interesting, the cut loses impact due to an obtuse lyrical narrative.

On “Seven plus...”, the group sounds uncannily like Dire Straits, with Daras recreating Mark Knopfler’s guitar sound to perfection while Karapiperis uses his harp to add variety to the track. They deliver another tribute on “Roy B.”, dedicated to the late Roy Buchanan. This moody song stops short of maudlin sentiments but misses capturing the essence of Buchanan’s legacy. “Strange Melody” has a slow, languid pace heated up by more fine guitar work from Daras. The band switches to an acoustic approach on “Surely My Body Gets the Message” and makes it clear that they understand the roots of the music. After a lengthy intro, “Buy a Dog” gets a strong beat Evageliou on a tale of warning for a cheating woman.

Small Blues Trap favors moderate to slow tempos, so there aren't a lot of fireworks on this recording. And the tonal quality of Karapiperis' vocals may not be to everyone's liking. On the positive side, the band has established a hybrid sound that gains traction with repeated listens. Daras stands out on numerous tracks for his guitar work but all the members make solid musical contributions. Check them out on their website or at cdbaby.com. You might find yourself liking the way these Greeks interpret the blues.

Reviewer **Mark Thompson** is president of the **Crossroads Blues Society** in Rockford, IL

