

Bad Temper Joe **The Acoustic Blues Guitar Revue**

If you seek some of Europe's finest blues and roots artists, songwriters and guitarists, look no further than Germany's Bad Temper Joe. While honoring the old bluesmen from the Mississippi Delta, Bad Temper Joe brings the blues into the 21st Century – and does so with excellent songwriting, a powerful performance, and staying true to the tradition. With songs as raw as they are haunting, the grumpy blues bard has gained attention in the blues scene over the last few years, receiving numerous nominations for blues awards and winning the German Blues Challenge in 2022. But the German has also already been making waves in the international blues scene, and was the only European Act to reach the finals of the 2020 International Blues Challenge in Memphis, Tennessee. As the British Blues Matters Magazine put it, “It’s hard to believe that the sounds of the Mississippi-Delta have relocated to Germany, but they have.”

“The Acoustic Blues Guitar Revue” spotlights the native Bielefeld artist as a masterful interpreter of traditional blues spanning the 1920s to the 1960s. The album's tracklist reads like a “Who's Who” of blues, featuring songs by Charley Patton, Elizabeth Cotten, R. L. Burnside, Mississippi John Hurt, among others. Bad Temper Joe’s vibrant interpretations of these genre classics brim with playful creativity and a flair for improvisation. With each track, the guitarist delves into the rich potential of his instrument—most often a weissenborn lap steel, a hollow-neck acoustic guitar played flat on the lap with a slide—showcasing his mastery without relying on a rhythm section. And yet, the question arises: This *cannot* be just Bad Temper Joe with a single guitar! The fact that it is makes it all the more impressive that this album was recorded entirely live, with no overdubs.

Bad Temper Joe doesn’t simply deliver more renditions of these 60- to 100-year-old compositions as they’ve been heard countless times before. Nor does he dissect the songs into trendy, postmodern, or over-stylized arrangements. Instead, BTJ possesses an uncanny ability to reveal the essence of these songs, performing them in such a way that makes it seem like they were always meant to sound just like this. Armed with just his guitar and voice, the bluesman captivates his audience over the course of the album with a performance that is as varied as it is entertaining and intellectually stimulating. On three tracks, Bad Temper Joe is joined by Marcel Rahe on harmonica, whose virtuoso yet understated playing complements the performance perfectly.

Undeniably, Bad Temper Joe is one of the rare contemporary blues musicians who steps out from the shadow of his influences. Instead of imitating, he has absorbed them so completely that they’ve become the foundation of his own distinctive style. With “The Acoustic Blues Guitar Revue”, BTJ reaffirms his brilliance as an interpreter, his prowess as a vocalist, and his finesse as an instrumentalist. He also showcases his talent as a songwriter with the album’s closing track, the original eight-minute blues epic, “If Tears Were Diamonds”. For anyone seeking an exceptional acoustic blues album but unsure where to begin—“The Acoustic Blues Guitar Revue” by Bad Temper Joe is the perfect starting point.