

## *Down in the Mood Room*

### Reviews

"Portnoy has few equals as a harmonica player, blues or otherwise. The Boston-based virtuoso radiates an insouciant charm playing Lullaby of Birdland, his pacing expert, and his splendid speech tones anoint Stormy Weather with a regal sort of world-weariness."  
- *Down Beat*, April 2002

With *Down in the Mood Room*, [Portnoy] makes his first charge at the battlements of jazz. And he scales the walls. . . . His shimmering vibrato and elegant bent notes sing with a diva's elan. . . the sound is as deep and rich as Delta topsoil."  
- *The Boston Phoenix*

"Down in the Mood Room is Portnoy's first venture into jazz, but it's packed with the same graceful playing that won over blues fans. His rich tone and swinging phrases power the Horace Silver standard Doodlin like a one-man horn section, and when he sinks into the melodies of Lullaby of Birdland and Stormy Weather, his vibrato and deliciously bent notes do, indeed, sing."  
- *Boston Magazine*

"Harmonica hero Jerry Portnoy successfully takes his signature sound beyond the blues on the eclectic *Down in the Mood Room*. Portnoy leads the listener down several intriguing musical paths, the most fully realized being a selection of jazz standards reinvented in the harmonica context. Portnoy's expansive expertise consistently surprises. . . . But it is his bold appropriation of jazz for the blues harmonica that makes this such a fascinating exercise in musical imagination."  
- *amazon.com*

"Jerry Portnoy . . . applies his amazing fat yet smooth sound to a set predominantly consisting of jazz and blues instrumentals. . . Portnoy is tremendously effective on moody pieces like the stark, oozing, slow swamp of Endless Road and atop the walking bass strut of Horace Silver's Doodlin. . . Portnoy's command is riveting. . . A tour de force of astounding yet tasty talent and savvy song selection, *Down in the Mood Room* is a low-key gem."  
- *cdnow.com*

"Jerry Portnoy shows tremendous versatility on this CD. . . *Down in the Mood Room* is an exciting mix of jazz and blues and is sure to please the most discriminating listener."  
- *jazzreview.com*

"The blues-meets-jazz format works so well here, even straight-ahead jazz compositions such as George Shearing's Lullaby of Birdland and Horace Silver's Doodlin' sound fresh from the sheets. . . . In an era when lesser musicians attempt to reinvent themselves by jumping aboard the swing bandwagon, Portnoy remains several steps ahead of the game."

- *Chicago Sun-Times*

"Few can blow the Mississippi saxophone like Jerry Portnoy. . . Portnoy is a harp man extraordinaire. Rarely has Portnoy as much freedom and control as on this new album . . . The sound is intimate, warm, and downright big. Portnoy's harmonica speaks with a human voice . . . This is a rock solid album of harmonica-driven jazz and blues with a good dose of hot guitar [Duke Robillard] by two of the best in the business."

- *Vintage Guitar*

"On his new CD, *Down in the Mood Room*, Jerry Portnoy displays the rarest of traits among modern blues harmonica players: good taste. . . Portnoy is a holdout from the old days, when style still mattered. . . So elegance and restraint are second nature to Portnoy, who dabbles in jazz and jump blues . . . along with more standard blues fare. *Down in the Mood Room* is Portnoy's show, and it's a fine one indeed."

- *Hartford Courant*

"There has always been a considerable amount of crossbreeding between jazz and blues. This is particularly evident in the music of Louis Armstrong, whose instrumental and vocal innovations were thoroughly rooted in the blues of his native New Orleans. More than it conjures Armstrong's Crescent City jazz, however, *Down in the Mood Room* echoes the gritty R&B and blues-drenched jukebox hits of tenor sax greats like Gene Ammons and Red Prysock. Portnoy blows a lovely and soulful version of the Ammons hit *Canadian Sunset* that showcases his huge tone . . . Particularly good are the opening Horace Silver track *Doodlin* and the aptly named and way-evocative *So Slow*, in which you can almost taste the stale cigarette smoke and the remaining swallow of whiskey in your glass at last call. Although folding jazz flavors into blues is nothing new, Portnoy's blend is so masterful, his tone so sublime and the musicianship so superb, time spent *Down in the Mood Room* is time well spent, indeed."

-*City Link Online*

"Portnoy chomps at his harp bit with the integrity and expertise reserved of the masters. . . a milestone harmonica recording by one of the best."

- *www.bluesartstudio*

"This CD exudes class, sophistication and style. Portnoy's Mississippi saxophone wails like a tenor with swinging intensity and drive. Jerry . . . kicks out all the jams on a harmonica tour de force that just oozes savoir faire. He is fluid and sinuous one moment and is boogieing [sic] hard and edgy the next. His own stuff is brilliant and funny as hell or deeply moving. This silver disk is all gold."

- *Long Island Blues Society*

"A master of tone and technique, it's hard to imagine anyone more qualified than Jerry to stretch the boundaries of the instrument. Jerry's an expressive player who favors melodic lines over honking . . . he sculpts every note with care, bending and shaping to

maximum effect while employing a tonal palette that ranges from bright, breezy metallic to raw distortion with plenty of dirt. . . . Harp fans will find this one essential; fans of big band jazz and jump blues will love it, as will anyone tired of the 'same-old-same-old' who's willing to explore the outer edges of blues, jazz or the harmonica itself. Top-notch stuff!"

- *Blues on Stage*

" . . . the star is unmistakably Mr. Portnoy, who squeezes beauty out of his harmonicas at every turn."

- *WVCR, Poughkeepsie, NY*

" . . . this is Portnoy's show all the way, displaying his astonishing harmonica talents with a fluid, big, warm tone delivered with amazing depth and emotion. Portnoy shows his range tackling both blues and jazz with equal authority. . . . an exceptional showcase for one of the most inventive and lyrical harmonica players on the scene."

- *Bad Dog Blues, WITR, Rochester, NY*

"Down in the Mood Room makes for a study in versatility of the harmonica. . . . this current production thrives in stylistic diversity beyond the blues cross-harp school. . . . that signature Portnoy tone -- bold and biting -- still reign[s] supreme . . . . A pure course in measured restraint and wistful lyricism."

- *Bluesrag*

"On Down in the Mood Room, exquisite blues harpman Jerry Portnoy shows that the blues harmonica is also a superb lead instrument for jazz. . . . Portnoy lovingly approaches his harp as a classical musician lovingly approaches his well-tempered instrument. . . . All this make Down in the Mood Room a treat."

- *Blues Groove*

"Down in the Mood Room is very close to the proto-jazz of Louis Armstrong's style in the 20's and 30's. . . . Portnoy's excellent album comes across as singular in an era in which blues more often fuses with rock sounds."

- *Blues Bytes*

"This recording goes far beyond the blues. There are several cuts in which Jerry plays distinctive horn lines producing a Louis Armstrong sound. His vibrato is amazing. . . . Jerry Portnoy is a great player who proves his ability to cover all genres of music."

- *Sonoma County Blues Society*

"Down in the Mood Room incorporates elements of straight-ahead Chicago blues and jazz for an album that will soon be recognized as "essential listening" material for all fans of the harmonica. . . . In the hands of a master the "lowly" harmonica is capable of

cutting straight through to the heart . . . and Jerry Portnoy is a master. . . refreshing, masterfully performed and flat-out enjoyable.”

- *Billtown Blue Notes*

“[Portnoy’s] skills are undeniable and there are moments on the CD where his playing is truly sublime.”

- *Illinois Entertainer*

“. . . an amazing amalgam of songs that meld blues and jazz for one of the artist’s most innovative releases ever. . . a sonic sendoff of American music fare.”

- *Westchester Wire*