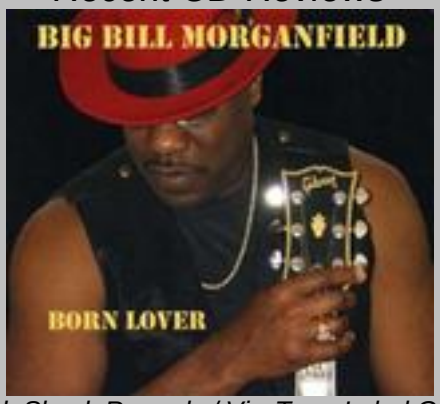
BIG BILL MORGANFIELD

Recent CD Reviews



Black Shuck Records / VizzTone Label Group

BluesWax Picks

'Born Lover Album' Hittin' His Stride, (10/01/09)

In 1999 **Big Bill Morganfield**, son of the late **McKinley Morganfield** a.k.a. **Muddy Waters**, released his first album. It was the result of a fifteen-year odyssey of self-discovery that culminated with his art. On *Rising Son*, Bill surrounded himself with personnel who had played with his father including producer/guitarist **Bob Margolin**, drummer **Willie "Big Eyes" Smith**, pianist **Pinetop Perkins**, and harmonica player **Paul Oscher**. Muddy would have been proud. With his father's sound and a youthful exuberance all his own, Bill earned a BMA award for Best New Artist. Two more albums on Blind Pig Records were to follow.

Now ten years later, Bill on guitar and vocals has done it again. Born Lover is Bill's first album in six years. Coproducer/ guitarists **Margolin** and **Brian Bisesi** have once again assembled a crackerjack band including **Clark Stern**, keyboards; **"Mookie" Brill**, bass; **Chuck Cotton**, drums and **Steve Guyger** on harp.

If this album were a methodical recreation of his father's songs he would be just a footnote. Instead, Bill shows us that his heart is as big as his name. Bill contributes three original songs. The timely "High Gas Prices" is about the summer that gas reached $4.80 a gallon, and "X - Rated Lover" is a sex-charged declaration. "Who's the Fool?" Certainly not Bill, just listen to this band! Guyger and Stern's solo's excel while the rhythm section of Brill and Cotton are "killer".

The title track like his last name is his daddy's and rightly so. A "Born Lover" is what he is. The apple don't fall far from the tree. That, however, is the only song of his father's as the rest of the album contains his versions of songs by **Howlin' Wolf, Snooky Pryor, Buddy Guy, Little Milton, Lonesome Sundown, Fillmore Slim**, and **Willie Dixon**. Dixon's "One Kiss" which closes out the album is absolutely fabulous.

If you're a lover of Chicago Blues, this album brings great news. Big Bill is back, and he's just hittin' his stride. This is one of the best traditional Blues albums of the year.

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Born Lover CD Review (2009) by j. poet

Big Bill Morganfield continues to forge his own sound with a delicate balancing act on this, his fourth album. He pays tribute to his dad and the Chicago sound he helped create on the title track, but he has a jazzy side that keeps moving the blues in a more sophisticated direction as well. **Al Duncan's** "Too Late Brother" opens things with a juke-joint rocker in the style of Morganfield's dad, with **Steve Guyger's** harp tossing some fat on the fire. "High Gas Prices", a Morganfield original, gives the country blues an urban edge with a tune too many sang in the waning months of 2009. Morganfield sings **Pearl Woods'** "I Play Dirty" with a winning combination of humor and aggression, with **Clark Stern's** organ giving the tune a sanctified feel. "Who's the Fool", another original, is a shuffle on the familiar subject of a faithless woman, and Morganfield growls out the lyric with plenty of panache. What really distinguishes Morganfield from his dad is his way with love songs.

Muddy always sounded dangerous, even when he was proclaiming his passion. Big Bill's voice is smoother and more mellow, and when he sings a soulful tune like **Buddy Guy's** neo-R&B ballad "My Love Is Real", his voice has a seductive power his dad lacked. On **Howlin' Wolf's** "My Last Affair" he turns up the wattage and bares his tortured soul with a hopeless vulnerability that's enhanced by some stinging guitar work. Former **Waters'** guitarist **Bob Margolin**, the man behind Morganfield's first two sets, produced the album and kept things grounded in the traditional Chicago sound. **Guyger's** harp is splendid throughout, but with three guitarists playing in the session -- Morganfield, **Margolin**, and **Brian Bisesi** -- some detailed liner notes would have been helpful to determine who's playing on the various tracks.

Big Bill Morganfield - Born Lover (2009)

By Reverend Keith A. Gordon, About.com

With a handful of studio albums under his belt, Big Bill Morganfield - the son of Chicago blues legend McKinley Morganfield a/k/a Muddy Waters - is well on his way towards establishing his own distinctive voice and legacy in the blues. Morganfield's fourth album, *Born Lover*, does a great job of further distancing the singer, songwriter, and skilled guitarist from under the long shadow of his father with a dozen hot performances.

Big Bill Morganfield's Born Lover

Since his emergence a decade ago, Morganfield has always been a steady, solid performer. Drawing upon the classic Chicago blues sound pioneered by his legendary father, Morganfield has seldom strayed far from the well. With "High Gas Prices," though, he has penned a classic song of his own, a working class blues anthem that will remain relevant until humanity ditches the internal combustion engine.
The song cranks serious amperage from the first notes with a dirty, deep groove that is driven by some nasty guitar tones and a steady drumbeat. Relying on a recurring, hypnotic riff worthy of R.L. Burnside or Junior Kimbrough, Morganfield delivers a talking blues lament about the state of today's economy. Much like Walter Trout's "They Call Us The Working Class," "High Gas Prices" taps into a rich vein of rage and frustration that is at the heart of the blues.

Soul-Blues, Made For Romance

Before the audience can get too rowdy, however, Big Bill brings it down, sharing the love with the listener with a pair of romantic numbers. Buddy Guy's "My Love Is Real" is one of the real overlooked entries in the guitarist's catalog, and in Morganfield's capable hands it's delivered as a smooth-as-silk soul-blues croon.
The title track, one of the senior Morganfield's musical gems and a bit of overstated braggadocio, is a rough-and-ready rocker with a staggered, swaying beat that features Bill's gruff vocals, Steve Guyger's blazing harpwork, and keyboardist Clark Stern's fleet-fingers tickling the ivories. With his band vamping it up behind him Morganfield acquits himself admirably on Howlin' Wolf's "My Last Affair." A smoldering, bluesy torch song with flaming guitar licks and passionate vocals, Stern's energetic piano fills may just push this version above the original.

Peace Of Mind

Snooky Pryor's rollicking "Peace Of Mind" is the kind of Chicago blues romp that you can really sink your teeth into, with deep vocals, swooning harpwork, and a slinky rhythm. The Morganfield original "Who's The Fool?" is a full-band blow-out with a great traditional "you done me wrong" story of love and betrayal supported by a tidal wave of strutting harp, reckless piano-pounding, and blistering guitar.
The original "X-Rated Lover" takes up where the title track left off, moving the storyline into the bedroom with a different perspective and a bawdier set of lyrics. The song benefits from some sizzling fretwork and Guyger's rowdy blasts of harmonica. Born Lover closes with an energetic reading of Willie Dixon's "One Kiss," Morganfield belting out the lyrics while the harp blows freely and the intertwined guitars sing clear.

The Reverend's Bottom Line

To his credit, Big Bill Morganfield has seldom used his father's name and reputation to further his own career, preferring instead to forge his own sound and identity. Yeah, it's still deep Chicago blues music, but Morganfield infuses his performances with an undeniable passion and energy, throwing in a little soul and jazz elements to keep things fresh and honest.
With his dad's former guitarist, "Steady Rolllin'" Bob Margolin once again handling the production chores (and lending a hand with his instrument), Morganfield's *Born Lover* is another solid effort from an artist that is slowly shaping the classic Chicago blues sound in his own image. (Black Shuck Records/VizzTone, released July 7, 2009)

www.bigbillmorganfield.com