



**Bob Margolin**  
In North Carolina  
*VizzTone, 2007*

Guitarist Bob Margolin has spent a long career as a sideman for the likes of legendary first generation bluesmen such as Muddy Waters, Hubert Sumlin, Pinetop Perkins and Carey Bell and has also waxed numerous solo discs. This disc marks his first "homemade" effort having been recorded entirely at his home studio and featuring only his own instrumental tracks and vocals. Freed of the constraints of having musicians on the clock and a studio meter running, Margolin uses the opportunity to romp through many different styles of blues. Kicking things off with the raucous slide frenzy of *Tell Me Why* Margolin takes a run at everything from slinky, swampy blues, *In North Carolina*, to old-timey, front porch acoustic blues, *You Rascal You*, to County & Western style lap steel blues, *Floyd's Guitar Blues*, to hot wired electric Chicago blues, *Lonely Man Blues* and even some T-Bone Walker style West Coast blues, *Natural Blues*. Throughout, his guitar playing reflects lessons well learned from his masters. He never overplays and hits just the right sweet spots to make the tunes stick. His vocals are another matter. While Margolin's voice is perfectly fine for the more upbeat electric numbers it has nowhere to hide when things slow down and go acoustic. Ouch! Overall, the vocal deficiencies are a minor complaint given the strength of Margolin's guitar chops.

Mark Smith



**Watermelon Slim and the Workers**  
The Wheel Man  
*Northern Blues, 2007*

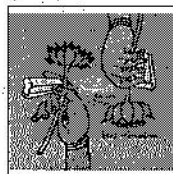
Bill Homans picked up the name "Watermelon Slim" during his tenure as an Oklahoma Watermelon farmer which is only one of the dozens of jobs he's held over the years including stints as a truck driver, fork lift operator, saw-miller, firewood salesman, collection agent and street musician. Along the way he also managed to pick up two undergraduate degrees and a master's degree and became a member of the genius IQ group, Mensa. So what does this have to do with the blues? Plenty as it turns out. While most bluesmen have a pretty limited set of experiences, which forces them into the "Baby done me wrong" and "The boss man is a jerk" school of writing, Slim's storied history gives him a rich and varied base from which to craft his songs. His tales of hustlers making a living as preachers, *Jimmy Bell*, card sharks, *Fast Eddie*, and women who take charge, *Truck Driving Mama*, are welcome changes from the standard blues fare. Slim also works in a few tales about his own detours into truck driving, *The Wheel Man*, writing for a living, *Newspaper Reporter*, and into the "there goes the fingers" world of sawmill operators, *Sawmill Holler*. Politics find the way into the mix as well as he delivers a scathing indictment of the Washington politicians who have ignored the plight of the flooded out south, *Black Water*. Even when Slim turns to more standard fare, such as on the tale of a stripper girl-

friend, *Peaches*, he reveals his broad range by resisting the easy clichés about the profession by noting that she's no victim as she clears the isles "like a Mako Shark" Likewise, he turns a tale about a woman who drinks too much, *Drinking and Driving*, into a clever play on the many ads that discourage such activities. Musically, Slim and the Workers take on everything from Foghat style blues rock on the title track to harmonica and piano fueled shuffles, *I've Got News*, to street corner busker style acoustic blues, *Jimmy Bell*, to a cappella work songs, *Sawmill Holler*, to Chuck Berry style rockers, *Rattlesnake*, and down and dirty Chicago style blues, *Got Love If You Want it*. Overall, a terrific release that will likely land Slim a whole bunch of new fans.

Mark Smith

**Doug Cox & Salil Bhatt**

Slide to Freedom  
*Northern Blues, 2007*



On this disc, Canadian **Doug Cox** melds his Mississippi Delta resophonic guitar grooves with the other worldly sounding Mohan Veena (a 19 string guitar like instrument) and Satvik Veena (featuring 20 strings- 3 for the main melody, 5 for drone and 12 sympathetic strings) played by the father and son team of **Vishwa Mohan Bhatt** and **Salil Bhatt**. Add **Ramkumar Mishra** on Tabla (a percussion instrument) and you have a fully realized fusion of East and West. While there's nary a boogie, shuffle or blues rock lick to be found, traditional blues fans who relish deft acoustic picking and slides burning up the strings will find plenty to like here. Those who want to ease slowly into the fusion of sounds should first check out the somewhat straight forward takes on **Blind Willie Johnson's** *Soul of a Man*, **Mississippi John Hurt's** *Pay Day* and Cox's own, *Beware of the Man (who calls you Bro)* which feature Cox's soulful vocals and a more prominent place for his resonator licks. While these cuts certainly feature some Eastern sounds they are accents instead of being the primary sonic palette. Those willing to jump straight into the mystical sounds of the East should light the incense, crank up the stereo and get ready for the hypnotic interplay amongst the musicians on the 10 minute plus *Bhoopali Dance* which reveals the many facets of the Satvik Veena by starting with an unhurried delicate trance inducing groove before igniting into a string sizzling, note bending delight. Keeping the Eastern mood intact, *Arabian Night* transports you to a far away desert scene that is as sweltering as the dense heat of the Delta that is at the core of so much of the traditional blues while the quieter, more reflective, *Fish Pond*, suggests an easy afternoon with a cane pole. The oddly named *Meeting by the Liver* conjures up a sinister movie plot made all the more menacing by Cox's wild attack on his guitar while a modal groove is percolating in the background. Adventure-some blues fans will have something to chew on with this interesting release. Those stuck in the Delta will be wondering who stuck the sound track to the curry joint down the street in their disc player.

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