

Blues in the northwest, United Kingdom

ELIAS BERNET BAND

"Life Is A Ball"

(EBB Productions – promo)

From St. Gallen in Switzerland, comes the second album from talented young keyboard player Elias Bernet and band – thirteen tracks covering blues, soul, funk and more – showcasing his fluid work on both piano and Hammond B3 organ and the kindred souls of his fine group of musicians.

Bernet and co-producer Greg Galli co-wrote 11 of the songs here, at times very reminiscent of the work of fellow Swiss artiste, Philipp Fankhauser, whose last album was well received here, and indeed the two have worked together.

The opening "A Man's Most Important Thing" is a funky blues propelled by the great horn section of Dave Feusi (saxophone), Bernhard Schoch (trumpet), Daniel Schenker (trumpet) and Nina Thoeni (trombone), with fluid guitar solo from Manfred Pristas, who stars throughout. "Am I Nuts?" is a driving blues with more piercing leads from Pristas, and some marvellous piano from Elias Bernet who solos here to great effect.

The soulful "Whose God Is The Divine?" takes the pace down, with sweet backing vocals from Freda Goodlett, with the rumba of "I Don't Like Beer" again dominated by Bernet's heartfelt vocal and piano and organ playing, leading to an album highlight, a big blues ballad, "Thanks To The Blues", with a share of the vocals taken by Vera Kaa, a very fine singer indeed, with a lovely soul-flavoured edge to her voice.

Bernet tackles the superb title cut of Solomon Burke's huge "Don't Give Up On Me" comeback album, and pulls off a memorable cover of the Dan Penn / Carson Whitsett / Hoy Lindsey song, with a great vocal and some sweet Hammond B3 organ fills – very nice indeed. "So I Go With It" is a soulful strut with the horns evident again, and the blues of "Nobody But You", with guitar solo from Larry Schmucki. Bernet shows off some classy boogie-woogie piano on "High Spirits", a rollicking instrumental number.

Elias Bernet and the band head back to the blues on "Lethargy", with a blistering opening guitar salvo and another fine solo from Larry Schmucki, on this 'lowdown' slow blues – another album highlight. The band rock out on the closing title cut, the joyous "Life Is A Ball" – the horns again right 'on the button', the rhythm section of Dede Felix (drums) and Urs Streckeisen (bass) driving the song along – indeed, they are really tight all the way through.

To sum up another classy offering from mainland Europe, with the Elias Bernet Band to be added to the ever-increasing blues talent around now –

and well worthy of your attention.

GRAHAME RHODES

www.eliasbernet.ch