

HOWARD and the WHITE BOYS

It's been six years since Chicago blues veterans Howard & the White Boys last put out a CD, but their new Evidence Records release, *Made in Chicago*, more than makes up for lost time. Their impressively large fan base on both sides of the Atlantic won't be disappointed. Not by a long shot. *Made in Chicago* represents the zenith of the band's recorded output, and it's certainly the disc that Howard & the White Boys are most proud of. While the band hasn't recorded in six years, they've been gigging continuously throughout the U.S. and Europe and this has lent their trademark brand of contemporary blues an indomitable tightness brimming with raw power. All of this comes through on the new disc, proving that the wait was well worth it.

While past studio outings spotlight the group's songwriting prowess and contain 90% original material, *Made in Chicago* affords the band an opportunity to put their own unique stamp to tunes they didn't write but enjoy performing nonetheless. Of the nine songs on the new release, seven are covers (some quite obscure) of songs the band has been playing live for some time. Yet, all are performed in the celebrated HWB style which will be immediately recognizable to long-term fans.

Recorded in the windy city, *Made in Chicago* is aptly titled. But it's also apropos because Chicago, a city steeped in blues history, is where the band have honed their chops almost since their inception in 1988. Howard & the White Boys have established a reputation as one of the city's favorite attractions and regular appearances at Buddy Guy's Legends has afforded them an opportunity to display their wares before locals and out-of-towners who come to Legends to hear the best the city has to offer in blues entertainment. Indeed, Buddy Guy has been their unofficial mentor. Guy's support for the band has been instrumental in exposing them to a wider audience. In 1995, he took them on a major Midwestern tour as his opening act, and he often jumps onstage to jam with them when they appear at Legends. He also gave them the ultimate endorsement by making a rare guest appearance on their 1999 release *The Big \$core*. He plays some scorching guitar and sings a duet with Howard on a remake of the Sam & Dave classic "I ThankYou."

The members of Howard & the White Boys first met at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb in 1988 and began jamming together just for fun, but their fast-growing popularity soon convinced them they could make a career of it. After only a few months, they got their first big break by opening for B.B. King. The band soon made the move to Chicago and began performing with the biggest names in blues: Koko Taylor, Albert King, Junior Wells, Lonnie Brooks, Luther Allison, Bo Diddley, and Chuck Berry.

Between 1994 and 1997, the group made two highly acclaimed recordings, *Strung Out On The Blues* and *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner?*, for Los Angeles based Mighty Tiger Records. They began traveling extensively across the United States and their growing popularity captured the attention of Philadelphia based Evidence Records. *The Big \$core* was the first of two successful discs released by Evidence, and the band wasted no time in promoting it via the first of many trips to European countries such as Belgium, France, Italy, Holland, Switzerland, Norway, Germany, Luxembourg, and England. Riding the ever-growing wave of popularity both at home and abroad, the group then released a well-received live CD for Evidence entitled *Live At Chord On Blues* in 2000.

In 2004, long time band members Howard McCullum, Rocco Calipari, and Jim Christopoulos were joined by 26 year old guitarist Pete Galanis. Galanis' tight blues chops—coupled with his natural versatility at handling the funk, R & B, and rock styles that have become Howard & the White Boys trademarks—have magnificently slotted right in with the group's signature sound and have also lent it an exciting, youthful exuberance, readily apparent on *Made in Chicago*. The band is now focusing on touring to support the new CD and working on material for their next one.