



The term “cult artist” was invented for performers like John Hiatt. Here’s a guy who has released eighteen albums over thirty years, has never had a hit single and had only a handful of albums even reach the charts. Yet his songs have been recognized by many artists through their cover versions and he continues to find major labels willing to release his albums to his small but loyal following. With only a couple of exceptions he’s been on an artistic roll since 1987’s “Bring the Family” and his new cd “Master of Disaster” continues that trend.

Hiatt’s previous backing musicians (Ry Cooder, Sonny Landreth, Nick Lowe, etc.) have also been a testament to the respect he has commands and on this album he works for the first time with some of the members of The North Mississippi Allstars and their father, legendary producer Jim Dickinson. The result is not the jam band/blues-rock you might predict from a pairing like this, but more of what we’ve come to expect from John Hiatt; an album of sly folk-rock with touches of country and blues styles.

The title cut opens the album with some great saxophone work that seems to substitute for his usual slide guitar sound. “Howling Down The Cumberland” is trademark acoustic John Hiatt that recalls his “Crossing Muddy Waters” from 2000. After the third track “Thunderbird” you realize you’re in for another consistently great album. “Wintertime Blues” has a bit of ragtime intertwined with his witty vocals and “Cold River” has an almost Springsteen type feel that wouldn’t be out of place on his latest cd “Devils and Dust.” The countrified “Old School” brings home the fact that Hiatt may not be the biggest star but he knows what his fans expect and he delivers the goods again on “Master of Disaster