

Puluche Album Review Rubric ©

Artist : The Black Keys

Album Title: Turn Blue (2014) Nonesuch

Criteria

Rating

Categories

4 - Exemplary

3 - Proficient

2 - Developing

1 - Underdeveloped

Compositions

Every song is quality and has a distinctive appeal of its own. Tracks have a perfect flow and continuity that enhance the album's overall appeal.

Many quality songs with distinctive appeal. **Tracks have a good flow and continuity that enhance the album's overall appeal.**

Some quality songs with distinctive appeal but not sustained. Track flow and continuity have little effect on album's overall appeal.

Few to no quality songs lacking any distinctive appeal. Track flow and continuity have little/poor effect on album's overall appeal.

17.5

Breaking Ground

Has impressive elements of high creativity and is experimentally innovative. Developing own signature sound. Shows extreme growth and/or potential as a substantial and influential artist.

Features elements of creativity and uniqueness. Shows growth and/or potential as a developing and influential artist.

Has very few moments of creativity and uniqueness. Shows little growth and/or some potential as a developing artist. Displays some stagnation or notable regression as an established artist.

Has no creativity and uniqueness. Shows no growth and/or little potential as a developing or established artist.

20

Engagement

Music has a transcending quality with numerous songs that grab the listener on respective emotional/social levels. Many songs have an addictive effect and memorable quality.

Music has transcending qualities with some songs that grab the listener on respective emotional/social levels. Some songs have an addictive effect and memorable quality.

Music has some transcending qualities with few songs that appeal on respective emotional/social levels, as well as having any addictive or memorable qualities.

Music has minimal transcending qualities and few to no songs that appeal on respective emotional/social levels. No positive memorable qualities.

20

Lyrics

Has a strong lyrical voice with multiple thought-provoking messages with clear and/or possible meanings and depth.

Has notable lyrical voice with some thought-provoking messages and/or possible meanings and depth.

Has limited lyrical voice with few-to-no thought-provoking messages, meanings and depth.

Has a weak lyrical voice with no thought-provoking messages or meanings and seriously lacks any depth.

20

Production

Masterful sound quality with noticeable studio techniques employed that demand headphone inquiry. Vision flawlessly executed. Overall packaging and artwork effectively compliments and enhances album enjoyment.

Very good sound quality with some noticeable studio techniques that demand headphone inquiry. Vision is acceptable. Overall packaging and artwork compliments album enjoyment.

Inconsistent sound quality with questionable studio techniques employed. Vision is questionable. Overall packaging and artwork fails to compliment album.

Questionable to poor sound quality. Lacks vision. Overall packaging and artwork fails to compliment album.

20

Comments

Continuing to push the boundaries within the genre, The Black Keys have come near perfection once again with *Turn Blue*. Almost paradoxically, the album is ages ahead of any other rock album released within the past few years in its reliance upon funk and soul music of yesteryear. This combination of a magnificent funk and soul blend leads to an album with more depth than we've seen from The Black Keys to this point. The end result is an album that really goes to show just how far the Akron, Ohio natives have come from their raw and powerful garage and blues sound listeners were familiar with early in the band's career. Bringing in more blues and soul than most modern bands has never been an issue for The Black Keys. From the onset of the album with the seven minute long opening track "Weight of Love," it's pretty easy to see that the rest of the tracks are probably going to be filled to the brim with a powerfully innovative soul sound you'd expect to see from the late 60s and early 70s (think a less psychedelic Jimi Hendrix meets Bobby Blue Bland), not 2014.

It's probably unsurprising to fans of The Black Keys that the following tracks don't disappoint, especially the tracks "Turn Blue" and "10 Lovers," although singling these two out as the only outstanding tracks is a bit unfair because almost every track on the album is worthy of its own standalone recognition. Dan Auerbach's vocals on many of these tracks has developed beautifully into a brilliantly evocative sound, and listeners won't be disappointed with the lyrical prowess of the album either. Additionally Carney's drums continue to serve as more than a backbeat, instead driving many of the album's songs.

From a production standpoint, the album only goes to show exactly how far The Black Keys have ascended, and the album is without a shadow of a doubt their most beautifully produced album to date. It's easy to see the band had a clear vision with the album, and this vision to highlight their evolution from a down and dirty garage and blues rock band to a band that's able to execute an album that would make Motown greats and blues legends such as Junior Kimbrough gleefully happy at the same time is nothing short of staggering. Incorporating a magnificent level of keyboard usage unseen to this point from a Keys album – such as found in "In Our Prime" – only helps to further this wonderful production.

Fans of previous Keys albums may take a little time warming up to the more soulful and less alt rock driven sound of albums such as *Brothers* and *El Camino* and the less raw and powerful sound of albums such as *Rubber Factory* or *Thickfreakness*, but those fans will be pleased to hear elements of these albums at various points throughout, such as the grungy "It's Up To You Now."

If there is one minor complaint about the album – and admittedly this is very nitpicky – it is the flow of the album's tracks. Due to the borderline-indescribable impressiveness of each song's uniqueness there is a minor level of incongruity on the album's flow. This isn't to say that the songs are so unique that they don't belong on the same album – in fact, that's partially why this album is as remarkable as it is – but rather the flow is disrupted a bit when a slightly more poppy track such as "Fever" is paired next to "Year in Review." Some may criticize the album as being too sleepy or too calm, but these criticisms are largely unfair as that assumption can only be made on parts of individual songs.

97.5

<p><u>Commendations</u></p>	<p>If both The Black Keys and their <i>Turn Blue</i> album can be summed up in one phrase it would have to be “impressive evolution,” as the album shows the jaw-dropping talent members Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney possess and the staggering overall progression the band has made since their first albums.</p> <p>Interestingly enough the songs that have received the most attention via radio airwaves as of now (“Fever” and “Turn Blue”) may be some of the weaker tracks on the album and hopefully listeners that fall beyond the label of “casual Black Keys fan” will really appreciate the beauty of tracks such as “10 Lovers” and the "summer anthem feeling" finale “Gotta Get Away.”</p> <p>The Black Keys are so far above and beyond any other rock band at this time. No other band has been able to not only replicate so many different genres throughout their eight-album career, but also possess the ability to do it so well. Describing the album as anything less than phenomenal does it a huge disservice, and it’s more than conceivable that the album will be nominated for more than a few Grammys. This is an album that fans and musicians alike are going to appreciate for its uniqueness and absolutely extraordinary array of superb songs.</p>
<p><u>Next Steps</u></p>	<p>Saying where The Black Keys will go from here is next to impossible. Seeing that the band was successful early on for its neo-blues music, it was more than conceivable that they would continue to make similar music, but instead shifted to a more modern alternative sound with albums such as <i>Brothers</i> and <i>El Camino</i>.</p> <p>The success of those albums would certainly make one think that “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” and there wasn’t anything broke with those albums, to say the least. Instead though, Auerbach and Carney insist on making The Black Keys more than a band that settles in a comfort level. The end result is an album like <i>Turn Blue</i> that sounds transposed from decades before. Although it’s their first album since 2011 it’s hard to say that the next album – whenever that maybe – won’t be equally as impressive and pioneering.</p>
<p><u>Reviewer</u></p>	<p>Carl Whitaker</p> <p style="text-align: right;">IRC: Bill Pulice</p>