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## Back Door Slam, Rusted Root @ House of Blues, 7/14/07



When I had the opportunity to go see Back Door Slam and Rusted Root at the House of Blues, I didn't know much about the first band, but I figured why not catch up with Rusted Root, that eclectic, blue grass infused with international sounds rock band? I remembered them from high school, when I bought that lovely album called "When I Woke," with the ever-popular "Send Me on My Way." Turns out my instincts were good, just a little misdirected. Rusted Root did put on a nice show, but they were outshone in a big way by the opening band, Back Door Slam.

Back Door Slam is from the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea. And they are, well, slammin'. It's probably a bit of an exaggeration to compare front-man Davy Knowles to blues greats like Eric Clapton, B.B. King or Robert Johnson, but if this guy isn't the best new blues guitarist and singer outside of Doyle Bramhall Jr, then I don't know who is (I'm guessing a few LAist readers might have some ideas, though). The guy rocks, he jams, he shreds, he does whatever it is that guitarists do when they're amazing. And he does it with soul. There are two other guys in the band -- Ross Doyle and Adam Jones -- but I hardly looked at them because Davy is

such a force.

The Slam played a cover of John Hiatt's "Riding with the King," a song perhaps better known for the version by Eric Clapton and B.B. King on a collaborative album released back in 2000. They closed with Jimi Hendrix's "Red House" and I think it was during that song that I really began to wish they would play all night. The crowd was eating up everything Davy was serving and the energy in the place was great because you could see he meant it, too.



When Pittsburgh natives [Rusted Root](#) finally came on stage it was something of a letdown. Their set seemed to lack the energy and real connection that Back Door Slam had achieved. It got a little more life in it during "Dance in the Middle," because -- guess who! -- Davy came on to play a little guitar. If it sounds like I want to name my first born son after this guy, it's because I do.

Anyway, Rusted Root continued without Davy, but with a little more life, mixing in a few covers of Stevie Wonder's "Superstition" and Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower" during "Cat Turned Blue." They played a new song, "Help Me Jesus," which gave credence to some of the claims made by their fans that their sound is turning "poppier" in the more recent albums. I remarked to my friend that the it sounded like something the Gin Blossoms could have written. There was a cover of Elvis' "Suspicious Minds" before finally getting to "Send Me on My Way," still their biggest commercial success.

Enjoyed the show, but now I'm just counting the days until next month, when I'll be in Chicago for Lollapalooza and I'll catch Back Door Slam on the BMI stage -- I think it's the same one Cold War Kids played last year, and it seemed to work out pretty well for those guys.

*Back Door Slam photo via myspace*

*[Rusted Root photo by half pint in nyc via flickr](#)*

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