

# Dr. Slide

American Roots & Blues

DR. SLIDE LIVE AT WHITE'S BAR

By: BO WHITE

Dr. Slide live at White's Bar

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Axel "Dr. Slide" Humbert HAS been around the piss-pot - jailed , impaled, betrayed, and exported. He is truly a unique and powerful bluesman. Originally from behind the Iron Curtain in East Germany, Axel's bluntness and integrity underscore the heaviness of his musical ideas. But it's in his sense of the absurd - that wicked Bavarian sense of humor - that he truly shines and allows his humanity to unfold. But this can be easily missed by an unsuspecting audience as it's folded so tightly into his message and delivered with such force and fury.

I must admit that I wasn't so convinced in the beginning. I was talking with Vickie Williams, a deejay and a member of Ohio's Blue's Society...and a staunch champion of Axel's. She sent me his CD, "Slidin' By"... I wasn't too impressed. But she called - "can I book Dr. Slide"? - and called and called and called...what a pain in the ASS. So I said OK just to get her off my back! So we agree Axel will open for the inimitable and very talented Doug Deming. Axel is unobtrusive as he sets up, almost shy. I talk with him a bit but I'm more taken with a friend of his Linda Diaz who KNEW the MC5 and other great Michigan Rockers from that golden era.

Anyway, Dr. Slide changes into costume - a blue-grey suit with a matching derby...very clean. And he assumes another persona entirely... what I call - THE SOUR-KRAUT - it's like an alter ego or an oracle that speaks the truth - and doesn't take no S-H-I-T

Dr. Slide opens with an uptempo 12-bar blues with heavy slide guitar and his foot stompin' out the beat like a latter day Mance Lipscomb or John Lee Hooker. He remains seated throughout



the show...head down and close to the mic. Intense. Axel dives into the old Robert Johnson chestnut "Crossroads" and make it his own. Singing in a ragged voice that sounds perpetually "pissed-off", Axel croaks and moans in a full frog-in-the-throat growl that recalls Captain Beefheart. Great version!!!

An original "Going Back To Mississippi" is dedicated to all the lovely ladies in the audience. It's about some of the clawing, scheming women that have

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thrown him down as they orchestrate their social position and climb to a higher class. Love be damned:

"Met a woman in a bar"

"She asked what do ya do for a living"

"I said I'm a garbage man"

"She said get away you sad old fool"

"I Wasn't Born Here", another Slide original, is one of many highlights in the set.

Axel begins with a spoken intro...setting the tone...

"Why does a guy from East Germany sing the blues...I got tired of answering the question so I wrote a song about it. And I learned that you gotta promote yourself shamelessly to make it in America". And so song begins...

"I wasn't born in Mississippi" - "I wasn't born in New Orleans" - "I wasn't born in New York City"

"I wasn't born in Memphis Tennessee" - I was born in Potsdam...in East Germany

"Behind the Iron Curtain" - "And the BLUES set me free"

A frightening and compelling - and ultimately victorious autobiographical sketch of Axel's struggle against oppression...when all he thought about was to be free. Axel led a fight for personal liberty - to be able to play the blues - and he was imprisoned for it...FOR PLAYING THE BLUES!!! This guy is the real deal It doesn't get any better than this. A compelling message that harkens back to the social commentary evident in blues forms - from the 1920's onward - and that re-emerged in folk or folk-rock protest songs in the late 50's early 60's.

"Small Man's Blues" follows with additional commentary about "right to work" laws. The song's setting is Florida: "I woke up this morning "I saw the raindrops on my windowpane"

"Guess I won't go to work today".

This is a rockin' 12-bar protest-blues at it's finest.

"Way up North they got a union" - "At least they get somethin' done" -

"But they pay so many taxes" - "They all lose in the end"

Axel is an incredibly gifted slide guitarist...at times his dexterity recalls the spirit of Bukka White or Duane Allman on some windowpane acid that's cut with just a touch of speed.

It's a sonic trip that suspends notions of time and proportion!

Axel excels in the unconventional and, like any great bluesman, has a facility for telling wonderful stories...filled with irony, regret...and humor.

He also sings about pain and loss

"A Friend For Life" is a tribute to his great great aunt. He was performing in Mississippi at the King Bisquit Festival when he learned that she had died. He described her as a person with a keen intellect who possessed a deep compassion that allowed her to merge reason with love...a philosopher. He would sit and listen as she would regale him with her stories...and they would share a little schnaaps.

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"I sit by the river"  
"Memories of you pass me by"  
You'd like it here I believe"  
"What a pretty sight"

"Sometimes I feel like crying"  
"Cos you're not around no more"

The lyrics are powerful and the sentiments are GRIPPING...a song about pure and undying love. A masterpiece!!!

Dr. Slide is one of the most original and unique performers to come this way in a long time. And he just might be an unrecognized genius!!

