



Oli Brown started playing guitar at age 13 in 2002. By the time he was 15, he was playing in America with the band, Blinddog Smokin', opening for Taj Mahal and Buddy Guy. After several summers touring the U.S. with the band, they encouraged the youngster to start his own band and in 2007, he did just that. He signed with Ruf Records in 2008 and has just released his second album for the German label, *Heads I Win Tails You Lose*.

Label head Thomas Ruf convinced veteran producer Mike Vernon (Eric Clapton, Fleetwood Mac, John Mayall) to come out of retirement to produce the recording. Brown wrote or co-wrote ten of the twelve tunes, and though a few of the songs could fit well on a pop or rock recording, Brown's torrid guitar work brings it all back to the blues, as does his soulful vocals.

It would be difficult to pick just a few favorites on track list.....all the tracks are either noteworthy for either a standout vocal or a fantastic guitar solo, or both. If I had to pick a few, they would include the opener, "Evil Soul," "Keeping My Options Open," "I Can Make Your Day," and "Love's Gone Cold" (which is the purest blues track on the disc), but don't make me choose. The two covers, a hard-rocking take on Peggy Lee's "Fever," and Blackstreet's mid 90's R&B hit, "No Diggity," are also recommended listening.

The band (Gary Rackham – bass, Jamie Little – drums, Dave Lennox – keyboards) are excellent, and Oli Brown's performance is as confident and assured as any twenty-year vet of the music business. You will be hearing more from this guy in the near future....I guarantee it. In the meantime, do yourself a favor and pick up *Heads I Win Tails You Lose*.

- Graham Clarke, Phoenix Blues Society's **BluesBytes**