

The Players: Jimmy "O," vocals, guitar; Harlem Spector, keyboards; Craig Pilo, drums; Guenther Kapelle, bass; Rico Zagona, percussion.

Material: Jimmy "O" cranks out contemporary crossover blues, without any limitations or restrictions placed upon him by tradition or market category. Lively and exciting, he brings you to the brighter side of the blues. Whether framed in traditional blues, rock, funk or a boogie woogie shuffle, variety is the spice of his band's sound, and they have some outstanding material to highlight it. "Hear That Train A Comin'" blasts at you with a rhythm that sounds like a freight train building up steam; "She Won't Do It But Her Sister Will" is a hilarious hard rock blues number; and "Tough Love" from his first CD, expresses the joy of the blues from the fresh eyes of a child. Jimmy "O" has a unique take on the blues: fun, uplifting, and charged with extraordinary energy. The fact that this group chooses not to play straight blues, but rather freely borrows from other genres, broadens its appeal beyond your typical blues band, and allows them to play blues-only venues. This group will fit nicely into any lineup, if you like variety and excitement in your music.

Musicianship: Jimmy "O's" style is flawless, and he plays with an authority that's awesome. His growling vocals can take on a lighter sound when a song calls for it, and he's very good at changing attitudes to fit the lyrics. But it's his guitar playing that is truly his strong point.

When Jimmy jumps on his axe, he can play with the best of them.

His guitar shouts and weeps, cries and laughs, and screams right into your soul. Nevertheless, Jimmy is surprisingly generous with his band. Every single member had an extended solo at one point or another, with each as good as the last. Spector's organ has a blues swagger that seems to undulate the stage, and the rhythm section of Kapelle and Pilo kept a driving beat going, moving smoothly from one mood to another, in a style reminiscent of Santana. And Zagona is a Congo player extraordinaire, who popped different rhythms into every song, counter-pointing off the bass and drums. This group is tight and focused, and clearly knows what they want to do.

Performance: Most of the action onstage—solos excepted—was all Jimmy "O." He was hyper, fun, and into it from the get-go. He'd have the audience worked up by telling a story about the song he was about to play, then launch into a performance on the guitar that would find him doubled over, with his forehead almost touching his boots. He played so hard that the sweat was pouring out of him. The band kicked it up a notch, and he extended it even further—bending, swaying and reaching to the sky until you'd think his back would break.

This is one of the most energetic, intense and moving performances you're likely to see.

This band kicked, moving the crowd out of their seats and onto the dance floor right up to the edge of the stage. And even more remarkable, some didn't even stay around for the headliner that evening—Jimmy "O" & Code Blue were enough to satisfy them.

Summary: This is a band unique in its approach to the blues. They are not tied down by its format, but rather expand its boundaries. It's still blues at its essence, but they take it to different places, and it makes everybody feel good.

—Bernard Baur

Jimmy O at Scruffy O 'Shea 's Marina Del Rey

