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Crooked Eye Tommy – *Butterflies & Snakes*

Self Release

[www.crookedeyetommy.com](http://www.crookedeyetommy.com)

11 tracks / 52:37

Crooked Eye Tommy is a cool band out of Santa Barbara, California that delivers plenty of good-time rocking blues. This is not just a funny band name or somebody trying to be politically incorrect, as singer/guitarist/songwriter Tommy Marsh was indeed born with a couple of crooked eyes. This band hit the stage in 2013 and quickly earned a trip to the 2014 International Blues Challenge in Memphis where they

made it to the semi-final round. After they got back to the Sunshine State they went to work on their debut album, *Butterflies & Snakes*.

The band includes Tommy and an experienced group of other locals, including his brother Paddy Marsh on guitars and vocals, Glade Rasmussen on bass, Tony Cicero behind the drum kit, and the legendary Jimmy Calire on keys. The Marsh brothers skipped the format that most bands use for their debut albums and did not include any cover tunes, instead putting together eleven of their own original songs for this project.

The first of the tunes on *Butterflies & Snakes* is the loosely autobiographical “Crooked Eye Tommy” which features resonator and heavily distorted electric guitars and it is evident that brothers can play some mean 6-strings. There is also a heavy beat provided by the Rasmussen and Cicero and the end product is a dark swamp rock/blues that turns out to be a great hook for the rest of the album. Next up is the cool Latin beat, processed guitars, and walking bass line of “Come On In,” which has clever lyrics that compare a broken heart to an empty house. Calire brought his organ and sax to this track to add the remaining pieces that end up making this song just a little spooky.

Paddy Marsh takes over the lead vocals on "I Stole the Blues" which is a shout out to the artists that have inspired them over the years. His voice is a warm growl and there is a slick interplay between the guitar and sax on this one while Calire nails down a killer solo. The list of the artists they have stolen from include the usual suspects, including Muddy Waters, Albert King, T-Bone Walker, and one surprise: Jerry Garcia! Fortunately these guys have decided that they no longer need to steal the blues and have decided it is "time to give it back."

Central Valley denizen Bill Bilhou sat in on the B3 for a few tracks, too. "Tide Pool" is a solid rock ballad with Paddy comparing the fate of love to that of a tide pool: will it be rescued by the sea, will a beachcomber pick it up, or will it dry up and blow away? Besides providing the background mood on this tune, Bilhou got a bit of a solo in too. He made more of a contribution on "Love Divine" which is a neat blend of funk, rock, jazz, and blues. Becca Fuchs and Dan Grimm provide some fine backing vocals on this one too, which is a nice counterpoint to the guitar pyrotechnics that are found throughout.

Tommy is not afraid to flirt with politics, as you will hear on a few tracks. "Somebody's Got to Pay" is full of frustration about how the government does not seem to care about anything but money. The band uses a 12-bar blues base with plenty of help from Calire on sax and organ to make this point. "Mad and Disgusted" has a similar theme, but this time they are more upset about the general decline of quality in life thanks to the meddling of the government in many facets of everyday life. It is nice to know that some folks think that blues can be about more than just getting your heart broken.

The band covers a lot of ground on this CD, and they finish their set with "Southern Heart" which brings out another influence of theirs that was not a prevalent on the rest of the disc. Their lyrics reference Lynyrd Skynyrd, but this country rock song has a bit of Bob Seger and some California country as popularized by the Eagles, thanks to the slide guitar work of Jesse Siebenberg (Supertramp). This is a strong tune, and could cross over to country radio with no problems.

Crooked Eye Tommy has done good work with *Butterflies & Snakes*, and their modern take on the blues is fresh and original. Their songwriting and musicianship are solid, and they will definitely have staying power in the Central Coast and Southern California blues scene. Strong evidence of this is their invite back to the 2016 International Blues Challenge to represent the Ventura County Blues Society in the "Best Self-Produced CD" category, so keep a crooked eye (or two) out for these guys!