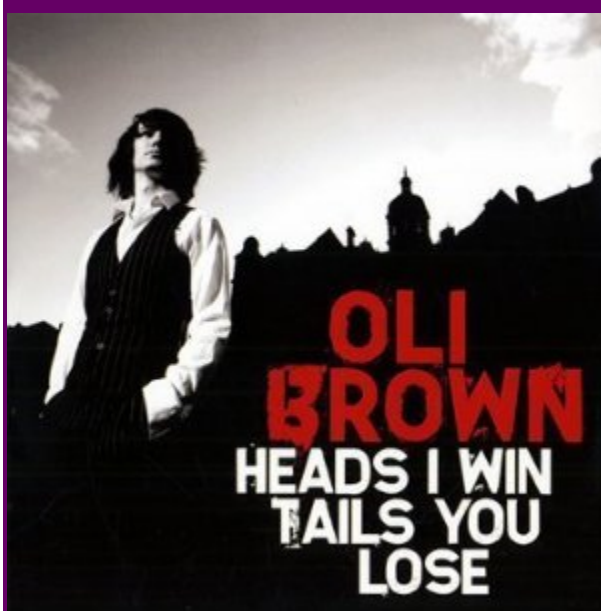


EVERYTHING BUT URBAN

Review: Oli Brown- Heads I Win Tails You Lose

By Annie Halo

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If this album is any indication, **Oli Brown** has won the coin toss. It drives its clutches right in from the first track, “Evil Soul”, a **Black Crowes**-esque wailer with a Nashville **beat** behind it and a certain degree of urgency.

While **Oli Brown** seems as American as apple pie, he is far from it; British-born and signed to the German blues label **Ruf Records**, America adopted him as their own from day one when he appeared at the **Memphis Blues Convention** in 2008. *Heads I Win, Tails You Lose* was **produced** by legendary blues **producer** and founder of the Blues Horizon record label, **Mike Vernon**.

The pacing of the album follows a tried-and-true formula; reel them in with the first three tracks, then drop it down a notch. “Keeping My Options Open” has a bit of a funk vibe to it and a chorus that is instantly classic in its simplicity. Drummer **Simon Dring** carries a tight and contagious groove over a constantly moving guitar.

“Speechless” slows us down and focuses on the vocals, a broken-hearted plea. The British blues influences are obvious and effective, and we are indeed left speechless at the end. “Fever” **kicks** it back up with an organ-oriented cover of the **Willie John** classic. The band also covers **popular** 90s R&B group **Blackstreet**’s hit, “No Diggity”, giving it a rocked-out and retro feel.

While **Oli Brown**’s guitar chops shine clearly through, the production is a **balanced** and sonically diverse effort, showcasing **Dring**’s drums and leaving room for everyone to **hear** the lyrics, which are catchy enough to make you want to sing them all day. *Heads I Win, Tails You Lose* packs a punch in its timelessness and, as a sophomore effort, is already the makings of a classic.

