

DELTA GROOVE

MUSIC, INC.

SEAN COSTELLO

Smokin' guitarist and singer Sean Costello went home to Atlanta to record his latest Delta Groove disc, "We Can Get Together," and the result is an eclectic mix of styles that recalls two of his biggest inspirations, Chicago guitarist Otis Rush and the Band's Levon Helm.

Like them, Costello ventures into all kinds of styles and grooves, from swamp rock to southern fried funk and passionate gospel –but in the center of the swirling cyclone, the listener always grabs onto his rock solid voice and ticklish guitar playing.

"I wanted to bring in my best buddies and capture the Atlanta scene which is not well represented," says the 28-year-old, who received some notoriety backing Susan Tedeschi on her break through disc "Just Won't Burn" and collaborating with Amy and Levon Helm in the New York gospel blues scene.

"In Atlanta you can go to a club and hear this strange mix of soul tunes, country tunes, and blues tunes all done by the same band on the same night, and it doesn't sound out of place. It's a peculiarly Southern thing."

A prodigy who began playing at the age of 9 and won the Memphis Blues Society's New Talent Award when he was 14, Costello is a restless student of the blues tapping rich and often unexplored nooks and crannies for inspiration. He released his first disc in 1996 and has been touring and recording ever since.

Says blues writer Tom Hyslop: "A musical discussion with him is as likely to touch on Otis Clay, O. V. Wright, Eddie Hinton, Otis Redding, Bobby Womack, and Johnnie Taylor (his all-time favorite singer) as Otis Rush, Robert Lockwood Jr., Freddy King, Bobby "Blue" Bland, Jimmie Vaughan, or Lurrie Bell (his favorite contemporary guitarist). And then he'll cite Bob Dylan, Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, and Jerry Lee Lewis."

You can hear it all on this disc and a lot more. (There's even a chicken coop for percussion on one tune.)

"Anytime You Want" is a mix of southern soul and English rock. Sixties era rockers like Robert Plant would smile at the ingenuity of it. This is what they were trying to do and then some.

"Same Old Game" is the best Stones tune the Stones didn't write with Costello playing two players worth of chunky guitar. "Can't Let Go" is a whole other direction, smooth Tyrone Davis style soul.

"Told Me a Lie," does what Costello does best: makes you scratch your head counting all the inspirations. There's a tuba, which brings to mind the Band and New Orleans Cajun haunts; some doo-wop (he was born in Philly, before his parents moved to Atlanta); a little gospel; the chicken coop; and a bit of Beatles whimsy.

"Hard Luck Woman" grafts a prison work song to later day Bob Dylan. "Going Home" channels Albert King; "Feel Like I Ain't Got a Home," brings to mind Sonny Boy Williamson and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

And "Little Birds" takes you into the heart and soul of a bluesman in the darkest hours of the night, when it doesn't seem certain that dawn is coming.

"So much of the blues these days is the same thing over and over," says Costello. "I wanted that feeling I get when I listen to my favorite records. I wanted to take a different spin on every song. I was trying to make it all sound fresh."

You can't listen to this without agreeing that he reached his goal and then some. This is one of the most inspired singer/songwriters to come down the road in a long, long time.