



EDDIE 9V

LITTLE BLACK FLIES

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All his life, **Eddie 9V** (9-volt) has acted on instinct. Aged just 15, this old-soul artist turned away from the path of college and jobs to burst all guns blazing onto the roots and blues club circuit of his native Atlanta, Georgia. Flash forward to 2019, and for his debut album, *Left My Soul In Memphis*, the prodigious multi-instrumentalist simply powered up the amps in his mobile trailer and with his brother/co-writer/producer, Lane Kelly, laid down one of the year's breakout releases, acclaimed as "fresh and life-affirming" by *Rock & Blues Muse*. "*Memphis* was a total side project," shrugs Eddie, "that ended up taking off."

Now, released in 2021 on Ruf Records, *Little Black Flies* is the 25-year-old's most impulsive move to date. Tracked live in Atlanta's Echo Deco Studios through November 2020, once again with Lane turning the knobs, plus a who's who of the state's best musicians, it's an album that Eddie planned to feel like it's unfolding right in front of you – right down to the clink of bottles and loose studio banter. "I've seen a trend in modern recording," he says. "There's no soul. I took inspiration from Albert Collins, Otis Rush, Mike Bloomfield. All those great records were done live with their buddies and no overdubs. I wanted the playing to be spot-on – but even if we made a mistake, we kept going."

Little Black Flies represents a passing of the baton to a bandleader that many credit for reinvigorating the South's proud roots scene. Born in June 1996, to a non-musical family living ten miles south of Atlanta, Eddie still remembers his fateful first guitar. "I was six and it was one of those with the speaker in it – get the most bang for your buck, y'know?" he muses. While manufactured pop dominated the airwaves as he came up at Union Grove High School in nearby McDonough, Eddie forked hard left, hanging with Lane and his friends, and digging back into the catalogues of blues giants like Al Green, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Freddie King and Percy Sledge. "I studied the older cats," he explains, "saw what made them groove and tick."

As for his freewheeling lyrics, Eddie credits his home life: "I've been making words up on the spot for years – my Uncle Brian taught me how to do that at our family fish fries. How to make people laugh, how to hold an audience's attention."

Eddie still recalls the frustration of watching local musicians load into the fabled clubs of Atlanta. "My first heroes were the local legends like Sean Costello, but I was too young to go see them," he remembers. When he finally made it inside, it was as a performer, learning his craft at the sharp end, and at precocious speed, with early vehicles like covers band The Smokin' Frogs, and its maturing blues-rock offshoot, The Georgia Flood. "My first step in being a professional musician was learning how to accept failure," says Eddie. "As a nobody, the music business is a dartboard. You just hope something sticks."

In 2013 – and before Eddie had even graduated high school – The Georgia Flood represented the Atlanta Blues Society in the International Blues Challenge in Memphis. That band spilled over into the indie-rock group PREACHERVAN, but perhaps the pivotal moment came in 2019, when he adopted the Eddie 9V moniker for his solo work. “There are too many Joe Schmo blues bands,” he reasons. “I was on the road with PREACHERVAN and we were talking like mobsters. We all gave each other names – and mine was Eddie.”

Since that rebirth as Eddie 9V, he’s not only pricked up the ears of the music press (“A huge talent,” wrote *Blues Blast*, “to be noticed and followed”), but earned a respect on the scene that made it easy to recruit local heroes for the *Little Black Flies* sessions. “Every player is the best of their craft,” says Eddie of his studio band, “and that’s why I picked ’em. We had the Tedeschi Trucks Band’s bass player Brandon Boone and the icon himself, Cody Matlock, on guitar. Everybody’s mood was so exciting. The energy was there.”

This record catches everything that went down at a session that felt more like a party, as Eddie leads the lineup through nine new songs – plus three classic covers – that retool the soul-blues genre on his own terms, reminding a new generation why this music hits so hard. Horns blast, drums rattle, slide guitars howl and at the heart of it all is Eddie’s stinging guitar and unmistakable vocal, the bandleader thrilling us one minute with his soul-man holler, then spinning story songs like he’s sat on the next barstool. “The title track,” he explains, “was a narrative about me being in love with the girl in the apartment upstairs, who was being abused, and wanting to do something about it. Deep stuff. “3AM In Chicago” is about America’s unfairness between race and income levels, but also wanting to improve on the situation. “Puttin’ The Kids To Bed” was a total ‘let’s hurry this up and get down to business’ song.”

With *Little Black Flies*, there’s a sense of an artist coming full circle: the kid who once loitered outside the clubs of Atlanta now leading Georgia’s greatest players into the studio. Certainly, these recordings gave much-needed catharsis to the musicians who created them. But perhaps Eddie’s ultimate aim is to pass that spirit on to everyone who hears the record. “It makes my day to please someone after they work all day,” he says. “My job is to make them smile and let the music make them forget – or remember.”

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