

ATLANTA MUSIC GUIDE

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CD REVIEW: MICHELLE MALONE -- Debris

By [Al Kaufman](#)

The first four songs on Moanin' Michelle Malone's new CD, *Debris*, are the four best blues songs you'll hear this year. It is, quite possibly, the best four-song combination ever put together in a blues album. If someone teaches a Modern Blues 101 class, that person should start with these. Malone's 10th release starts off with "Feather in a Hurricane." With its thick, heavy chords, the song about surviving in our current economy swirls like the weather pattern mentioned in the title. The idea behind "Yesterday's Make Up" is a blues staple; she wakes up on Sunday morning still wearing Saturday's dress. But here is where Malone pulls a twist. Behind a rock beat, Malone screams out, "I feel beautiful / In yesterday's makeup," and even goes so far as to point out the fact to the Sunday preacher.

On "Debris," which slowly builds using Keith Richard-like riffs as blocks, Malone comforts a potential lover who has had a troubled childhood. "If you're lonely, come and lay down with me / If you're tired, baby, we can just go to sleep." And, finally, there is "Undertow," a rootsy blues number about a woman whose lover doesn't treat her right. Malone displays her sensitivity and toughness. And just when you think she may be vulnerable enough to give in and let her lover have another chance, she cuts loose with a killer guitar solo that lets everyone know she is not to be messed with.

The rest of the CD is strong as well. Malone has always sounded like a **young and hungry Bonnie Raitt**. Her vocals can be just as sweet and soulful, but she can also be as rough and tumble. The one-two combination of "Chatahoochee Boogaloo" and "Weed and Wine" cover the mandatory blues terrain of sex and drugs. They are down and dirty without resorting to raunchy. And they're boot-stomping fun.

Lyricaly, this is one of Malone's strongest efforts. Even when she occasionally wanders dangerously close to adult contemporary, as she does on "Marked," she comes up with wonderfully vivid lines such as, "This one's gonna leave a mark, like a rusty knife in surgery." Her voice is as strong as it ever was. And musically, well, no one has ever doubted her mastery of the bottleneck slide. Producer Nick Di Dia, who has engineered Pearl Jam and Bruce Springsteen under the production of Brendon O'Brien, was smart enough to leave most of the dust and dirt on these tracks. The CD starts to get a bit too polished at the end, but Malone's sheer talent overcomes that problem as well.

If you like the blues at all, you owe it to yourself to own this CD. Anytime you feel depressed about the decline of good music, put it on. These blues are guaranteed to bring you sheer joy.