

DENNIS JOHNSON

## Revelation

*Booda Lee*

Crackerjack slide guitarist Dennis Johnson continues to venture outside of his roots-oriented comfort zone, this time for a smooth set of mostly blues-rock that's heavy on tone, articulation and groove.

The Northern California artist began exploring a more groove-oriented approach on 2017's "[Rhythmland](#)," his third album. "Revelation," the follow-up, takes the groove factor even higher — thanks in no small part to the enlistment of session great [Anton Fig](#) on drums. Throw in longtime cohort and Berklee College of Music alum [Jonathan Stoyanoff](#) on bass, as well as Netherlands export [Bob Fridzema](#) (Walter Trout, Joanna Taylor Shaw) on piano/organ, and it's a recipe that can't miss.



The impetus for this groove-centric album came from playing a show with [Eric Gales](#), according to interviews given by Johnson during the run-up to its release.

"I was listening to Eric, and I really liked a lot of the grooves he was playing with," he said during an [interview](#) for a weekly podcast called "Shades of Blues" that's produced by a radio station in northwestern England. "... As a teenager, I liked a lot of this blues-rock stuff; but I hadn't been doing that on the previous records — it was much more rootsy."

Besides his dexterity on the slide, which comes from years of discipline and perseverance, Johnson possesses a tenor voice that's easy on the ears and well-suited for cover tunes and original compositions alike. Take the Johnson number "Salvation Bound," for instance, in which his rootsier side still peeks out a little (complete with its "Give Me That Old Time Religion" tease on guitar in the second half).

The only voice heard on the title track, however, is the one emanating from a Fender's strings as a glass slide is dragged across them — gently and with finesse at first, but then steadily growing in intensity (as the guitarist's fingers apply more pressure) until a not-quite-fuzz effect is achieved. Thank god for Leo Fender, Johnson said in the above-mentioned interview as he explained the hardware used on his mind-blowing instrumental.

The acoustic "Two Lights" is a nice little guitar-and-bass ditty, whose title and/or subject matter perhaps was sourced from [Robert Johnson](#)'s "Love in Vain." Regardless, it lends a perfectly placed counterbalance to the overall proceedings (for the cognoscenti who still listen to albums from start to finish).

Best of all is the cover of [Gary Clark Jr.](#)'s "Don't Owe You a Thang." One would be hard-pressed to find a better instance of rhythm slide guitar that sounds like it's multitracked but isn't, layered over a nearly relentless military beat and some superbly understated bass. 🎸

### Tracks

1. Going Down ([Don Nix](#) cover)
2. Talk To You
3. Revelation
4. Salvation Bound
5. 32-20 Blues (Robert Johnson cover)
6. Please Don't Go (aka Baby, Please Don't Go, [Big Joe Williams](#) cover)
7. Lonesome Valley
8. Ramblin' On My Mind (Robert Johnson cover)
9. Two Lights
10. Don't Owe You A Thing (aka Don't Owe You A Thang, Gary Clark Jr. cover)

Total time: 37:12