

Ike Turner – Blues Roots (1972)

Written by bluesever

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01. *You're Still My Baby* (2:58) 02. *Tacks In My Shoes* (2:58) 03. *The Things I Used To Do* (2:57) 04. *Goin' Home* (3:01) 05. *Lawdy Miss Clawdy* (1:37) [play](#) 06. *Right On* (4:45) 07. *Think* (2:59) 08. *Rockin' Blues* (2:48) 09. *That's Alright* (2:59) [play](#)
10. *My Babe* (3:22) 11. *Broken Hearted* (3:29) 12. *If You Love Me Like You Say* (3:02)

The title's no joke: *Blues Roots* is the lean, mean collection of blues standards Ike Turner (1931-2007) long promised to deliver, crafted with real conviction and energy. Turner cut the album in his home studio and played all the instruments himself, which contributes significantly to the music's raw, earthy appeal. Even his deadpan vocals work in this context. But whatever its other virtues, *Blues Roots* is first and foremost a showcase for Turner's blistering guitar, several cuts are instrumentals, in fact. And don't worry about authenticity, if anyone's lived this music, it's Ike. ~ All Music Guide

By now everyone knows that Ike Turner has passed. Just about every notable publication had an obituary or opinion on Ike and not surprisingly many focused on his well publicized troubles instead of his musical legacy. Serious blues and rock fans know that well before Tina, Ike was a major player on the R&B and blues scene of the 1950's. Less well known is that even during the Ike & Tina years Ike would occasionally go in the studio with a version of his Kings of Rhythm or members of the Ike & Tina band and cut some roots based records. In 1962 he cut an instrumental album for Sue called *Dance With Ike & Tina Turner's Kings of Rhythm*, in 1969 when he was out on tour with the Ike & Tina Turner Revue, he found time to cut the instrumental album *A Black Man's Soul* (reissued by Funky Delicacies in 2003), *Strange Fruit*

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was another instrumental outing cut in 1972 for United Artists and then there was the aptly titled Blues Roots also cut for United Artists in 1972. It seems Ike was looking back a bit to his early days as Ike and Tina cut a couple of solid blues based albums for Blue Thumb in 1969; *Outta Season* and *The Hunter*, the latter featuring an uncredited Albert Collins on guitar. In 1969 he also produced Earl Hooker's *Sweet Black Angel* for Blue Thumb; supposedly he plays piano but it may in fact be Ike's buddy Ernest Lane but Ike does play guitar on the blistering instrumental "The Mood" that closes the album.

It's a shame Blues Roots hasn't been issued on CD as it features Ike on a dozen blues tracks playing some stinging guitar and singing exceptionally well. Ike reminds me of Earl Hooker in the sense that both were outstanding guitar players who weren't confident vocally, although both were good singers, who relied on a host of others to do the singing. From what I've been able to dig up Turner cut the album in his home studio (the album was cut at Bolic Sound which was a studio Ike himself built) and played all the instruments himself although there's no mention of this on the album itself.

Blues Roots is an earthy, well produced album with some occasionally odd but effective overdubbing and it's clear that Ike was having some fun turning the knobs and experimenting in the studio. At its heart the album sticks close to the title as Ike puts his unique stamp on covers like Chuck Willis' "You're Still My Baby" and "Broken Hearted" both beautifully sung numbers with Ike crooning quite a bit like Charles Brown with the latter featuring Ike tearing it up on both piano and guitar. Ike proves to be a fine singer and his frequent spoken asides are priceless. "Goin' Home" is another wonderfully sung number with bleating trumpet while "Lawdy Miss Clawdy" and "Think" are fairly faithful covers with the latter boasting some of Ike's dazzling string bending. Ike's impressive fretwork is also showcased on the low-down "Rockin' Blues", a sizzling cover of "That's Alright" backed by some vamping horns, "My Babe" and the slightly chaotic, yet infectious "If You Love Me Like You Say" sporting a wild, rock tinged guitar sound. Finally I have to mention the bizarre "Right On" with a strangely overdubbed vocal as Ike raps out a litany of observations; pearls of wisdom include "I love snow but I hate cold weather, things always go better with Coke" and "Like the rich man he, go out look for the pretty girl, the pretty girl go out looking for the rich man. The two get together – sad news" and "There's one thing about the dark, you can't tell black from white – everything feel alright." Whatever you say Ike!?

I'll be doing an extensive tribute to Ike on the January 13th show. Featured will be a good number of Ike's 1950's sides with the Kings of Rhythm, some of his session work, sides with Tina plus a few other assorted odds and ends including some tracks from Blues Roots.

---sundayblues.org

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