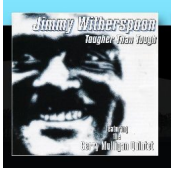


Jimmy Witherspoon – Tougher Than Tough (1997)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 22 October 2011 18:39 - Last Updated Wednesday, 03 March 2021 22:40

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1. *Time's Getting Tougher Than Tough* - 3:03 2. *How Long Blues* - 3:25 3. *Corrina, Corrina* - 3:21 [play](#) 4. *C.C. Rider* - 4:45 5. *Roll 'Em Pete* - 4:27 6. *Everyday* - 2:46 7. *I'm Gonna Move To The Outskirts Of Town* - 3:48 8. *Kansas City* - 3:15 [play](#) 9. *Trouble In Mind* - 3:28 10. *St. Louis Blues* - 3:49 11. *In Blues* - 3:31 12. *Loser's Blues* - 2:15 13. *Please Send Me Someone To Love* - 2:28 14. *Life's Highway* - 2:25 15. *Cry The Blues* - 2:25 16. *Out Blues* - 2:07

Bass – Leroy Vinnegar, Jimmy Bond Drums – Mel Lewis, Frank Butler Guitar - Herman Burrell Mitchell Piano – Jimmy Rowles, Paul Moer Organ - Richard 'Groove' Holmes Saxophone – Ben Webster, Gerry Mulligan Vocals – Jimmy Witherspoon

Following the master of ceremonies' introductory remarks, Witherspoon kicks off the medium up 'Time's Gettin' Tougher Than Tough' as drummer Lewis lays down a solid foundation beneath him. Webster solos with Lewis' booting phrases backing him. 'Spoon comes in once more for a second vocal, then, after a series of stop-time breaks, winds things up.

Jimmy Rowles' soulful introduction catches the spirit of the slow, mournful 'How Long blues'. Mulligan moves in behind Witherspoon's vocal then goes for himself, his big horn digging deep into the blues. When 'Spoon takes the mike again, Webster noodles in the background until all concerned take it out.

'Corina-Corina' finds The Tailor laying out the time on top cymbal, riding along behind the vocal, then digging in behind Webster's romping, barking and grunting solo with a rolling eight-beat. As Witherspoon resumes, Jimmy Rowles fills the gaps with piano commentary as the horns riff on to the final chorus.

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A slow roll from Mel and 'Spoon launches into the classic 'C. C. Rider' with Webster in background first, then Mulligan murmuring on the second chorus. "Shoot that man, Catch that cannon-ball," 'Spoon exhorts. Then Mulligan enters to play a thoughtful and meaningful solo that must be considered by many his best blues playing on record. After a throbbing Witherspoon cries, "Where did you stay last night?" both horns ride on to the coda.

'Roll 'Em Pete' is up tempo and jumping. Webster riffs behind the vocal, then embarks on his solo with 'Spoon urging him on. Another vocal, then Jimmy announces "Leroy Vinnegar," and the bassist takes a solo. The Tailor takes two solo choruses with Witherspoon announcing his name and after a final vocal it's "Bye, bye." Next kicks off in walking tempo with Rowles bringing in 'Spoon with an oddly happy lament, belting out 'Every Day'. Webster's fine gutty solo concludes with a funky trill to bring in the next vocal chorus.

As both horns ride along behind the singer, it's another rideout ending. On the 'Outskirts of Town' finds Witherspoon soulful and down. Webster comes in behind him to commiserate, then is joined by Mulligan's second voice and both horns moan in sympathy. Ben now breathes the blues all alone before 'Spoon re-enters to enunciate the risque but probably realistic lyric before concluding. 'Goin' To Kansas City' is a jumpin', walkin' reminiscence about "standin' on the corner 12th street and Vine." Mulligan double-times his solo for two choruses, then straight-times his third. 'Spoon speaks out again with the rhythm section belting him on in a real KayCee groove. 'Trouble In Mind', yet another classic, is lamented by the singer with Webster telling his own story in background. Mulligan solos in almost lyric vein, and 'Spoon calls his name. The singer sums up the message by almost groaning, "Gonna lay my head on some lonesome railroad track . . ."

Witherspoon's fervent "Ahh-men" brings in W. C. Handy's 'St. Louis Blues' with Webster blowing strongly behind him. The Tailor slides into fast tango rhythm on the verse before Ben comes back with a preacher almost guttural in character. Leroy walks a chorus before 'Spoon returns for a final outing with Webster's tenor rooting him home. --- John Tynan.

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