

## Janiva Magness - The Devil Is An Angel Too (2010)

Written by bluesever

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1 *The Devil Is An Angel* 2 *I'm Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down* 3 *Slipped, Tripped And Fell In Love* 4 *I'm Feelin' Good* 5 *Weeds Like Us* 6 *Walkin' In The Sun* 7 *End Of Our Road* 8 *Save Me* 9 *I Want To Do Everything For You* 10 *Your Love Made A U-Turn* 11 *Homewrecker* 12 *Turn Your Heart In My Direction* Janiva Magness - Vocals (Background) Ted Andreadis - Hammond B3, Keyboards, Wurlitzer Gonzalo Bergara - Guitar (Acoustic) Stevie Blacke - Strings Spanky D - Vocals (Background) Brie Darling - Percussion, Vocals (Background) Dave Darling - Guitar, Guitar (Acoustic), Keyboards, Mixing, Vocals (Background), Wurlitzer Gary Davenport - Bass Stephen Hodges - Drums, Percussion Ernie Perez - Vocals (Background) Arlan Schierbaum - Farfisa Organ, Hammond B3, Piano Jeff Turmes - Bass, Guitar, Sax (Baritone), Slide Guitar Zach Zunis - Guitar

It would have been natural for soul/roots vocalist Magness to capitalize on the success of her 2008 Alligator debut by shifting toward a more commercial middle ground for the follow-up two years later. While she hasn't changed direction drastically, it's encouraging that Magness finds under-the-radar material to wrap her husky voice around. Those somewhat unlikely sources for torchy songs include gems from Nick Lowe and Julie Miller. The latter provides the title track, setting the album's philosophical tone by examining both the angelic and demonic sides of human nature. That theme weaves through the disc on stirring, often rousing covers of tunes made famous, or at least introduced to Magness, by Graham Parker ("I'm Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down," perhaps better-known to R&B fans through Ann Peebles' classic performance), Percy Sledge ("Walkin' in the Sun"), Marvin Gaye ("End of Our Road"), and Joe Tex (the often covered but rarely impressive "I Want to Do Everything for You"). She also revisits the Nina Simone well. Simone is a logical source since the singer's eclectic song choices seem to be an inspiration for Magness' own approach. Here she dusts off and breathes new life into the Bricusse/Newley standard "Feeling Good" (incorrectly listed as "I'm Feelin' Good"). The disc's wide stylistic range flows together effortlessly with Magness' broad, sultry, soulful vocals, unique arrangements, and a band that tugs at the heart of these songs, delivering taut yet spacious performances. Many of the players return from her last outing with standout work from guitarist/co-producer Dave Darling. His swampy touch meshes with drummer Stephen Hodges' patented, rubbery thumping. The combination works flawlessly with

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the Memphis groove of "Playhouse," where Magness' powerful pipes bite into the song like a hungry wolf. She's just as effective on "Weeds Like Us," an ominous, deep Delta blues ballad written by husband/bassist/guitarist Jeff Turmes, who also contributes the closing, standard-styled "Turn Your Heart in My Direction." Magness connected with a definitive version of Gary Nicholson's "You Were Never Mine" a few albums ago, and finds another Nicholson gem in the aching gospel of "Save Me." These dozen songs barely break the 40-minute mark, allowing the singer to hit her targets and move on. Magness nails every performance, seamlessly shifting from dark to light. It's that dichotomy that brings the tension and release, edging her a little further from the typical R&B territory that is only a starting point for her dynamic talent. ---Hal Horowitz, allmusic.com

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