

## The Fabulous Thunderbirds - On The Verge (2013)

Written by bluesever

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01 – *I Want To Believe* 02 – *Lovin' Time* 03 – *Too Much Water* 04 – *Hold Me* 05 – *Runnin' From The Blues* 06 – *Do You Know Who I Am* 07 – *Got To Bring It With You* 08 – *That's The Way We Roll* 09 – *Diamonds Won't Kiss Your Back* 10 – *Lonely Highway* Kim Wilson (vocals, harmonica); Mike Keller, Johnny Moeller (guitar); Morgan Price (saxophone); Kenny Rittenhouse, Liesl Whitaker (trumpet); Victor Barranco (trombone); Kevin Anker (keyboards); Jason Moeller (drums); Mark Merella (percussion); Christal Rheams, Caleb Green, Paige Martin, Daryl Duff (background vocals).

Perhaps it shouldn't be a surprise that a band so often defined by its guitarists takes on a different character once the lead singer -- the only constant in the group since its beginnings in the mid-'70s -- definitively asserts his status as the band's leader, yet the change within the Fabulous Thunderbirds that can be heard on *On the Verge*, their 12th official studio album, is striking. The last time the Thunderbirds released a studio album was in 2005, during a stint when the great Austin guitarist Nick Curran was the sparring partner of vocalist and T-Bird linchpin Kim Wilson. In 2013, guitarists Johnny Moeller and Mike Keller, talented axemen both, now support Wilson and they do get a chance to flaunt their gifts on *On the Verge*, but the focus is firmly on songs and rhythm. It is surely a soul-blues album, often copping the cool, relaxed Memphis groove and reaching down to the gritty funk of Muscle Shoals. This not only gives Wilson room to stretch vocally -- he's supple and sensitive on "Lovin' Time" -- but this means *On the Verge* is a richer, fuller album than many latter-day Thunderbirds albums, because this isn't just dedicated to slow, swaying seduction, there are wah-wah-fueled workouts, a bit of social protest, some jazzy flourishes, and, yes, a bit of the Texas blues that the T-Birds call their own. But what's striking about *On the Verge* isn't just the versatility, it's the ease: Kim Wilson doesn't sound desperate to stretch out; he's merely comfortable leading his band toward all the soulful sounds he's loved. The result is a thoroughly satisfying album, a long-delayed but very welcome flipside to the rollicking *Painted On*. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, [allmusic.com](http://allmusic.com)

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