

Bettye Lavette – Let Me Down Easy In Concert (2000)

Written by bluesever

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1 *My Man* 4:50 2 *Damn Your Eyes* 9:43 3 *Right In The Middle* 4:33 4 *You'll Never Change* 5:25 5 *Almost* 3:10 6 *Your Turn To Cry (Your Time To Cry)* 4:07 7 *He Made A Woman Out Of Me* 3:38 8 *Let Me Down Easy* 8:40 Bettye LaVette Vocals Gail Barker Vocal Harmony Guy Barker Guitar Rayse Biggs Horn, Trumpet David Brandon Drums James Chaney Saxophone Greg Cook Drums Gregory Cook Bass Edward Gooch Horn, Trombone Pat Lewis Vocal Harmony Rudy Robinson Keyboards Jerome Shavers Vocal Harmony

This German import captures the essence of Betty Lavette, Detroit's most underrated female singer. Betty approach to recording was similar to the way pugilists Sugar Ray Leonard, and Muhammad Ali approached boxing rounds -- dance and parry the first two minutes or so then crank it up the last 30 seconds. The first two minutes of a song was just a means to get to the juicy part near the fade for Betty, where she goes into her hiccups, vocal gymnastics, oh yeah's, and sermonizing. Philadelphia International Records was tailor-made for Betty's style (since they let singers "go off" on the songs' tail), but she never got a chance with PIR. She should have been one of the original Motown artists, she toured with nearly everybody there, but didn't get on the label until the company relocated to Los Angeles.

The eight songs represent Lavette at her best delivering emotionally unstable southern jerkers like "Your Turn To Cry," "Let Me Down Easy," and "You'll Never Change"; there's nothing bubble gum or innocence about her. A neglected Motown single "Right in the Middle," "He Made a Man Out of Me," and "Damn Your Eyes" are equally as captivating. Betty immense, deep soulful delivery never translated into high chart notches, heavy sales, or cushy gigs, and that's a cotton pickin' shame. Her soulful alto deserves bottling, it's like Mavis Staples', but sharper and grittier. ---Andrew Hamilton, AllMusic Review

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