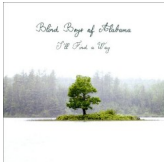


Blind Boys Of Alabama – I'll Find A Way (2013)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 11 January 2019 16:02 -

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1 *God Put A Rainbow In The Cloud* 2:40 2 *I'll Find A Way (To Carry It All)* 3:44 3 *I Am Not Waiting Anymore* 3:44 4 *I Shall Not Be Moved* 2:48 5 *Take Me To The Water* 3:26 6 *I've Been Searching* 2:42 7 *There Will Never Be Any Peace (Until God Is Seated At The Conference Table)* 5:22 8 *Take Your Burden To The Lord And Leave It There* 3:28 9 *Every Grain Of Sand* 5:27 10 *My God Is Real* 4:13 11 *Jubilee* 4:25 Sam Amidon Vocals J.T. Bates Drums, Drums (Snare), Drum Set, Percussion Phil Cook Guitar (Acoustic), Guitar (Electric), Hammond B3, Piano, Piano (Electric) Casey Dienel Vocals Merrill Garbus Vocals Patty Griffin Vocals Mike Lewis Bass (Upright), Guitar (Bass), Sax (Alto), Sax (Tenor) Theodore Peter Lucas Composer Reggie Pace Drums, Euphonium, Percussion, Tambourine, Trombone, Tuba, Vibraphone Tracy Pierce Guitar (Bass) Justin Vernon Banjo, Guitars, Loops, Synthesizer, Vocals Joey Williams Guitar (Electric) Shara Worden Vocals

Justin Vernon may seem a curious choice to produce a Blind Boys of Alabama record. But adventure has been the group's M.O. during the 21st century, as they've collaborated with musicians of almost every stripe, with varying degrees of success. *I'll Find a Way* was recorded over four days at Vernon's Wisconsin studio, with arrangements and musical direction from Phil Cook played by a handful of players, and hosting an array of contemporary vocalists including Shara Worden (*My Brightest Diamond*), Casey Dienel (*White Hinterland*), and Merrill Garbus (*tUnE-yArDs*), among others. The Blind Boys -- Jimmy Carter, Eric "Ricky" McKinnie, Joey Williams, Tracy Pierce, Ben Moore, and newcomer, high tenor Paul Beasley -- made the trek. Longtime bass singer Clarence Fountain, unable to travel due to illness, added his vocals from Birmingham. Five of the set's 11 tracks feature the group performing solo with backing musicians. The BBs expertly spin the country gospel chestnut "God Put a Rainbow in the Cloud," as if it had been part of their songbook forever. The traditional "Take Me to the Water," (based on Nina Simone's arrangement) led by Beasley's falsetto, is among the most moving things here. Its arrangement is adorned simply by a tuba, upright bass, piano, and a drum kit. Dienel and Carter deliver a chilling cover of the Chi-lites' "There Will Never Be Any Peace (Until God Is at the Conference Table)." Despite the drum loops that underscore its rhythm section, Cook's dignified piano and the organic percussion point directly at the frontline singers, whose voices contrast beautifully. They are elevated by the BB's choruses and Mike Lewis' soulful

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tenor saxophone solo. Garbus and the BBs offer a deft lover's rock reggae read of the spiritual "I've Been Searching." The title track, written by the late, obscure Detroit guitar/sitar master Ted Lucas, is the album's finest moment. The arrangement is modeled on the Band's setup circa Big Pink, and frames Worden's throaty yet otherworldly alto. Her phrasing uncovers subtlety in the lyric; her body and spirit are fully invested. The BB's expansive harmonies plumb the emotional depths in the codas and chorus. When Vernon layers her soprano range into the backdrop, a melody worthy of Motown reveals itself. Patty Griffin and the group jar it all loose on Charlie Parr's house-rocking "Jubilee" to close it on a rousing note. There are things that don't work here: there are stilted, wooden arrangements that mar "I'm Am Not Waiting Anymore" with Sam Amidon, and Vernon's duet with Carter on Bob Dylan's "Every Grain of Sand." Otherwise, I'll Find a Way is a fine, if uncharacteristically restrained, Blind Boys of Alabama recording.

---Thom Jurek, allmusic.com

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