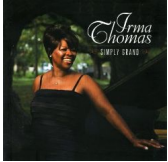


Irma Thomas - Simply Grand (2008)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 16 March 2010 11:25 - Last Updated Sunday, 23 September 2018 09:07

Irma Thomas - Simply Grand (2008)



01. *River Is Waiting (with Henry Butler)*
02. *If I Had Any Sence I'd Go Back Home (with Dr. John)*
03. *To Much Thinking (with Jon Cleary)*
04. *Early In The Morning (with Tom McDermott)*
05. *What Can I Do (with David Torkanowsky)*
06. *Underground Stream (with David Egan)*
07. *Thinking About You (with Norah Jones)*
08. *Be You (with Dr. John)*
09. *This Bitter Earth (with Ellis Marsalis)*
10. *Cold Rain (with David Torkanowsky)*
11. *Somebody Told You (with John Medesky)*
12. *Overrated (with Davell Crawford)*
13. *Same Old Blues (with Marcia Ball)*
14. *I Think It's Going To Rain Today (with Randy Newman)*

Backing Vocals – Charles Elam III, Earl Smith, Elaine Foster, Erica Falls Bass – James Singleton (tracks: 1, 3 to 6, 10, 12), Peter Harris (tracks: 9), Tim Luntzel (tracks: 7) Cello – Kristen Miller (tracks: 5) Congas, Bongos – Michael Skinkus (tracks: 4) Congas, Tambourine – Alfred Roberts (tracks: 1, 6) Drums – Jason Marsalis (tracks: 9), Raymond Weber (tracks: 1, 3 to 6, 10, 12), Steve Jordan (tracks: 7) Piano – Dave Torkanowsky (tracks: 5, 10), Dr. John (tracks: 2, 8), Ellis Marsalis (tracks: 9), Henry Butler (tracks: 1), John Medeski (tracks: 11), Marcia Ball (tracks: 13), Randy Newman (tracks: 14), Tom McDermott (tracks: 4) Piano, Backing Vocals – Davell Crawford (tracks: 12) Piano, Percussion, Backing Vocals – Jon Cleary Piano, Backing Vocals – David Egan (tracks: 6) Piano – Norah Jones (tracks: 7) Viola – Patricia Doucette (tracks: 5) Violin – Hannah Thiem (tracks: 5), Nathan Cohen (5) (tracks: 5) Vocals – Irma Thomas

After a lifetime in the business, the Soul Queen of New Orleans finally won a Best Contemporary Blues Grammy in 2006 for *After the Rain*. As everyone knows, there's a lot more to Thomas than the blues. She's a powerful R&B belter, simmering soul singer, and all round

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entertainer as comfortable with a standard like "Stormy Weather" as she is with a new tune like Dr. John's "Be You." True to its punny title, Simply Grand features Thomas in the company of 13 piano players laying down accompaniment on the acoustic grand. The tunes are old and new, borrowed and blue, but Thomas makes them all her own. The most powerful tracks here showcase Thomas and a solo pianist, bringing the feel of a smoky late-night bar on the end of lonely street to life. "Be You" features Dr. John, who played piano on the very first Thomas recording session, 1959's "You Can Have My Husband (But Don't Mess with My Man)." Rebennack's piano on "Be You" is dramatic and funky, halfway between a Mardi Gras romp and a Sunday morning sermon. Written by Rebennack and Doc Pomus, it's a simple, soulful love song with a playful vocal by Thomas. On the Louis Jordan standard "If I Had Any Sense I'd Go Back Home" Mac and Thomas get down and dirty, with Thomas delivering a casual vocal that plays around with the beat, while Rebennack backs her with clusters of rippling arpeggios. "Somebody Told You," a sassy Allen Toussaint R&B number Thomas recorded back in 1962, gets a reprise (in the same key as the original) with John Medeski rolling out some stomping New Orleans funk on his solo while Thomas testifies with her usual soulful intensity. Marcia Ball chose the Leon Russell tune "Same Old Blues" for the session and gives it a gospel twist that lets Thomas flex her moaning lower register. Randy Newman supplies keys and his own "Think It's Going to Rain Today" to close the album. Thomas makes a bleak lyric even more forlorn with an understated sighing vocal that's downright heartbreaking. But the album also has its sassy, uptempo moments. John Fogerty's "River Is Waiting" also has a celebratory churchy ambience with great backing vocals, Henry Butler's sanctified piano, and Thomas' testifying lifting the tune to heaven. "Early in the Morning," another Louis Jordan tune, a tongue in cheek tale of a woman looking for solace after being up all night, gets a humorous read from Thomas and pianist Tom McDermott. "Underground Stream" is a pop tune from pianist David Egan that combines R&B and gospel with a classic '40s pop feel. The chorus is instantly memorable, and if there was any justice in the world it'd be the monster hit Thomas deserves. ---All Music Guide

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