

Big Mama Thornton - Stronger than dirt (1969)

Written by bluesever

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A1 Born Under a Bad Sign 3:40 A2 Hound Dog 2:27 A3 Ball and Chain 4:30 A4 Summertime 4:14 A5 Rollin' Stone 3:55 B1 Let's Go Get Stoned 4:25 B2 Funky Broadway 4:18 B3 That Lucky Old Sun 3:30 B4 Ain't Nothin' You Can Do 3:37 B5 I Shall Be Released 4:34

This is one of my favorite albums ever. I bought it at the time because of my love for Janis Joplin & wanted to hear the woman that had had such an affect on her. The album was made on the heels of Cheap Thrills as a comeback but never achieved the success she hoped for. It includes a remake of Hound Dog Man & Ball & Chain, as well as a version of Summertime that Joplin had covered earlier. All of them are strong sets comparable to her earlier versions. The rest is material that is chosen wisely.

Her version of That Lucky Old Sun, to me, is one of the great songs of transcendent honesty. She lets you feel the truth of life & it's burden. It was the first time, at the age of 18, that I "got" the blues. I understood & more than likely it was the first time I realized it was never going to be easy on this earth, but that it was endurable. The title of the album itself says this very thing.

Her version of I Shall Be released, has much the same feel, & is to my mind, the most interesting arrangement of the song. It's always been the one Dylan song I found great & has been covered well by many. To me this is the best. It is the one & only time that this song swings & when she belts out "You know, Big Mama, I was framed" you know she knows exactly what he's talking about. She expounds the universal.

The album starts off with Born Under A Bad Sign, another song that she was born to sing. It's

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material she has lived. All the songs on this album are good, not a filler in the lot & all are handled by her with ease. It's clear it's all material she enjoyed giving her Big Mama interpretation to, from Funky Broadway to Let's Go Get Stoned to Rollin' Stone to Ain't Nothin' You Can Do. This is her strongest outing in the studio.

There seems to be almost a contradiction in the fact that here was this big voice that came out effortlessly. Something that, no matter how good she was, Joplin did not have. It took a lot of effort & burned her out. Big Mama despite living the blues was never buried in them. She knew how to let the good times roll, specifically, because she knew how hard it could be. On this album, after years of obscurity she's enjoying the attention that's finally come back to her, rolling up her sleeves & saying: "This is what they're talking about, here's the treasure. This is what you've been missing." ---Robido, rateyourmusic.com

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