

George Benson - Walking To New Orleans (2019)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 29 June 2019 13:24 -

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01 Nadine (Is It You) 3:54 02 Ain't That A Shame 3:50 03 Rockin' Chair 3:39 04 You Can't Catch Me 3:35 05 Havana Moon 4:54 06 I Hear You Knocking 3:45 07 Memphis, Tennessee 3:19 08 Walking To New Orleans 4:08 09 Blue Monday 3:03 10 How You've Changed 3:22
The Bovaland Orchestra Backing Vocals – Mahalia Barnes, Natasha Stuart, Prinnie Stevens Baritone Saxophone, Soloist – Ron Dziubla Bass Guitar – Alison Prestwood Drums, Percussion – Greg Morrow Guitar, Vocals – George Benson Piano – Kevin McKendree Rhythm Guitar – Rob McNelley Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone – Paulie Cerra Trumpet – Lee Thornburg

George Benson gets back to Americana basics on *Walking to New Orleans*, the jazz guitar legend's tribute to both piano-pounding hit machine Fats Domino and the original rock guitar hero and poet, Chuck Berry. *Walking to New Orleans* is Benson's first recording since 2013's *Inspiration: A Tribute to Nat King Cole*, but it couldn't be more different. Where Benson embellished Cole's cool tunes with lush orchestral arrangements, *Walking to New Orleans* came about by hunkering down in a Music Row studio, with a quartet of first-call Nashville cats. This is Benson's 45th album, and few sound as loose-limbed and flat-out fun.

---allaboutjazz.com

Following up 2013's urbane *Inspiration: A Tribute to Nat King Cole*, George Benson returns with another tribute production, 2019's ebullient *Walking to New Orleans: Remembering Chuck Berry and Fats Domino*. Interestingly, while Benson is best known for his funky instrumental jazz of the '70s and '80s, and smooth R&B crooning of the '80s and '90s, both of these latter-career tributes find him tackling material from even older traditions. Where *Inspiration* was a lushly swinging standards album, *Walking to New Orleans* is all blues grit and old-school R&B

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swagger. Though primarily influenced by jazz artists like Wes Montgomery and Charlie Christian, Benson certainly owes at least a modicum of his soulful style to early rock legends Berry and Domino, both of whom helped shape the sound of modern rock and pop music. As Benson grew up in Pittsburgh, the album's title evokes a conceptual travelogue as he moves from the Midwest through Berry's home state of Missouri, all the way down South to Domino's hometown of New Orleans. To help achieve this rootsy trek, Benson worked with producer Kevin Shirley (John Hiatt, Aerosmith, Joe Bonamassa) at Nashville's Ocean Way Studios, where he also conscripted the assistance of pros like drummer/music director Greg Morrow, guitarist Rob McNelley, pianist Kevin McKendree, and bassist Alison Prestwood. The results are loose and straightforward as Benson (primarily showcased here as a singer) takes on Berry favorites like "Walking," "Nadine (Is It You?)," and "Memphis, Tennessee," as well as Domino hits like "Ain't That a Shame," "I Heart You Knocking," and "Blue Monday." While there are tasty Benson guitar licks peppered throughout, fans of his instrumental work may wish there was more of an emphasis on his improvisation. Nonetheless, these are earthy and robust productions that never stray too far afield of their rock & roll source. ---Matt Collar, AllMusic Review

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