

Come Together - Black America Sings Lennon & McCartney (2011)

Written by bluesever

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01. Chubby Checker / Back In The USSR [0:02:45.51] 02. Maxine Brown / We Can Work It Out [0:02:18.71] 03. Fats Domino / Everybody's Got Something To Hide [0:02:32.63] 04. Wee Willie Walker / Ticket To Ride [0:02:31.43] 05. Roy Redmond / Good Day Sunshine [0:02:40.69] 06. Mary Wells / Please Please Me [0:02:25.18] 07. Gene Chandler / Eleanor Rigby [0:02:40.09] 08. The Vibrations / And I Love Her [0:02:15.47] 09. Chairmen Of The Board / Come Together [0:03:50.67] 10. Billy Preston / Blackbird [0:02:46.48] 11. R.B. Greaves / Paperback Writer [0:02:35.36] 12. The Moments / Rocky Raccoon [0:04:16.45] 13. Black Heat / Drive My Car [0:03:10.24] 14. Junior Parker / Lady Madonna [0:02:14.03] 15. David Porter / Help [0:03:37.57] 16. Linda Jones / Yesterday [0:02:32.12] 17. Otis Redding / Day Tripper [0:03:30.63] 18. Lowell Fulson / Why Don't We Do It In The Road [0:03:45.06] 19. Little Richard / I Saw Her Standing There [0:03:28.27] 20. Donald Height / Don't Let Me Down [0:03:36.21] 21. The Main Ingredient / Get Back [0:03:05.06] 22. The New Birth / The Long And Winding Road [0:03:44.04] 23. Al Green / I Want To Hold Your Hand [0:02:05.08] 24. Aretha Franklin / Let It Be [0:03:28.51]

The respect the Liverpool lads paid to U.S. soul artists -- by covering tunes early in their career from the Motown, Little Richard, Isley Brothers, and Arthur Alexander catalogs and turning them into Beatles songs -- gets switched around on this immaculately researched and assembled collection. Throughout its 24 tracks, the compilers excavate deep into the archives of American soul to find rare and obscure covers of Lennon and McCartney (no Harrison) compositions. This shows the effect the Fab Four had on '60s and '70s R&B and funk artists, whose often raw approach infused rootsy American grit to the material. Names such as Donald Height (singing a wonderful "Don't Let Me Down," one of the Beatles' most soul-inflected offerings), Wee Willie Walker (a driving, Stax/Wilson Pickett-driven "Ticket to Ride"), and Black Heat (getting funky on "Drive My Car") will only be familiar to hardcore fans of obscure soul. But their versions are every bit as incisive and, well, soulful as choices from the more legendary likes of Aretha Franklin (a full-on gospel reading of "Let It Be), Otis Redding (doing his "got-a, got-a, got-a" best on "Day Tripper"), and Little Richard (returning the favor of the Beatles singing his tunes and borrowing his "wooooo" shout with a rollicking reading of "I Saw Her Standing There"). Mary Wells, who opened for the band early on, gets a little schlocky on a Vegas-styled "Please

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"Please Me," a song she probably heard nightly as part of the Beatles repertoire, but most of these selections bring a biting R&B flavor to the songs. The compilers scoured the vaults to find R&B versions of unlikely material such as "Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except Me and My Monkey (Fats Domino), "Rocky Raccoon" (the Moments), and a twist on "Why Don't We Do It in the Road" from Lowell Fulson (arguably the album's most left-field choice) that do these songs justice, placing them in a different context but maintaining the Beatles' lock on melody. That's also the case with "fifth Beatle" Billy Preston's swampy "Blackbird," which shifts the vibe from hushed folk to harpsichord/organ-enhanced gospel. Both Beatles and U.S. soul fans will find plenty of unpredictable, even revelatory surprises throughout this generous 72-minute disc. Creative, Revolver-styled cover art further elevates the package. Enlightening liner notes in a bulging 20-page booklet featuring rare photos explain why these songs were chosen (and why others were not), and set the stage for a second volume of this concept that should be every bit a delight as this one. ---Hal Horowitz, Rovi

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