

Spirit - California Blues (1996)

Written by bluesever

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01. "California Blues" 3:48 02. "Look Over Yonder" (Jimi Hendrix) 2:35 03. "The River" 4:22 04. "Call On Me" 2:58 05. "Crossroads" (Robert Johnson) 5:46 06. "Song for Clyde" 5:40 07. "Pawn Shop Blues" (Brownie McGhee, Sonny Terry) 2:48 08. "Sugar Mama" (Chester Arthur Burnett) 3:18 09. "Red House (live)" (Hendrix) 6:12 10. "Gimme Some Lovin'" (Davis, Winwood, Winwood) 3:36 11. "We Believe" 3:40 12. "One World/Like a Dog/Poem for John Lennon/Shoes Back On/Tell – Everyone [live]" Randy California - guitar, vocals Ed Cassidy - drums, vocals Matt Andes - slide guitar Steve Loria - bass Rachel Andes - vocals & John Locke - keyboards tracks 3,10,11,12 Scott Monahan - keyboards tracks 6,9,10 Spencer Davis - guitar, vocals track 10 Robbie Krieger - lead guitar track 8 Bruce Gary - drums track 10 Todd Smallwood - lead guitar track 12 Bob Nichols - drums track 3 Arthur Barrow - bass track 7 Denise Gula - strings track 4 Michael Lewis - horn arrangements

California Blues is both Spirit's first new studio album in six years and -- due to the accidental death of guitarist/singer/songwriter Randy California -- its last. For its release, the ever-changing band consists of California and drummer Ed Cassidy, as usual the sole original members; Matt Andes, brother of original bassist Mark Andes, on slide guitar; Steve (Liberty) Loria, a bassist who has been in several lineups of the band since the 1970s; and singer Rachel Andes, Matt Andes' daughter. Original keyboardist John Locke, credited as a guest musician, plays on four tracks. The album is, to a certain extent, Spirit's blues album, as its title suggests, but it is really a grab bag of different material from different sources. In addition to a handful of new Randy California originals ("California Blues," "The River," "Call On Me," "Song for Clyde," "We Believe," and "One World"), there are several covers: "Look Over Yonder" and "Red House" (in a 1993 live recording) by California's mentor, Jimi Hendrix; a Cream-style arrangement of Robert Johnson's "Crossroads"; Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee's "Pawn Shop Blues"; Howlin' Wolf's "Sugar Mama" featuring the Doors' Robbie Krieger on lead guitar; and the Spencer Davis Group's "Gimme Some Lovin'" with Davis himself on guitar and background vocals. And after the album proper ends with the anthemic "One World," there is an extended bonus-tracks section that includes California's "Poem for John Lennon" and, as a treat for Spirit fans, three low-fidelity live performances by the original Spirit at the Magic Mushroom nightclub in Los Angeles, circa 1967 -- "Shoes Back On," "Tell Everyone," and "Soundtrack for a Moth." Rachel

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Andes' vocals are a good addition on the new songs, particularly the acoustic ballad "Call On Me," which is a duet between her and California. California Blues includes some excellent Randy California guitar playing and suggests new directions for Spirit that, unfortunately, the band would never be able to pursue, as well as featuring entertaining guest performances and historical curios. ---William Ruhlmann, allmusic.com

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