

Mighty Sam McClain - Give It Up To Love (1993)

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01. Give It Up To Love 02. Too Proud 03. What You Want Me To Do 04. Here I Go Falling In Love Again 05. Got To Have Your Love 06. Child Of The Mighty Mighty 07. I'm Tired Of These Blues 08. I Feel Good 09. Love Me If You Want To 10. Don't Turn Back Now 11. Lonesome Road Bass – Mike Rivard Drums – Lorne Entress Guitar – Kevin Barry Piano, Organ – Bruce Katz Tenor Saxophone – Bennie Wallace (tracks: 5) Vocals – Mighty Sam McClain

McClain sings soul with incredible power -- he knows when to pull the punches and when to cool it down. "Give It Up to Love," the title track, acknowledges his gospel roots; he performs it as a vocal prayer to God asking for wisdom, love, and strength. Bruce Katz's contributions on B-3 Hammond organ expands McClain's sound, particularly on the "Green Onions"-influenced "What You Want Me to Do." The sparsely effective arrangement on "Here I Go Falling in Love Again" brings McClain up front as he cries of being a soul stripped to the bare bones. Kevin Barry's funky bass blows while McClain declares himself as a child of God in "Child of the Mighty Mighty." ---Char Ham, AllMusic Review

Mighty Sam McClain's new CD is a best of, 11 tracks that have been on his last four studio albums plus two unissued tracks, make up this welcome release for anybody new to Sam. A lot of smaller record companies have to try to make ends meet, so after about 4 albums, they bring out a "Best of," which is an excellent way to catch up with an artist or get to know a artist.

In the case of Mighty Sam who has been making some of his best music during the nineties, not

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that he hasn't in the past. Sam's "Live in Japan" from 1988 and "Your Perfect Companion" from 1986, are both worth seeking out. The nineties has seen Sam relocate to Boston where he has linked up with some first class musicians, which is shown to great effect on this "Best of" album.

The CD starts with "Too Proud," which was originally on his 1993 release "Give It Up To Love," and is a Carlene Carter song which has some terrific B-3 Hammond playing from the gifted Bruce Katz. Also to be fair it has some great guitar work from Kevin Barry and is well supported by Drummer Lorne Entress and Bass player Michael Rivard. "Too Proud" tells the tale of the pitfalls of pride and shows the quality of what is to come on the CD. The one thing that Sam is good at, is the ability to convince an audience of his pain and hopes for the future which he does so well on the gospel flavored "New Man In Town" with a good horn section, playing to good effect. Sam also has a great ability to describe the hurt and the joys of falling in love as he does so well on "Here I Go Again Falling In Love Again." I once had the pleasure of talking to Sam over several days and he told me that he had been to the bottom and that he had made a promise, that if God got him through to better things he would praise God everyday. This explains why on Sam's albums he sings the praise of the lord as in "Hanging on The Cross" and "Lord Will Make A Way," which see's Sam in a spiritual mood. "Lord Will Make A Way" is an Al green song which sounds like it was written for Mighty Sam. "Who Made You Cry?" is a song dedicated to women and is sung with a soft passion which builds up nicely into a great vocal performance.

The two unissued songs "Honey Chile" and "I'm Gonna Love You" are both uptempo and one wonders why they never made it on to the "Journey" album, as they were both recorded at the sessions for that album, and see the band playing well together. Special mention again to the wonderful piano playing of Bruce Katz on "When The Hurt Is Over" and slide guitar from Kevin Barry gives this song a wonderful steamy swampy Louisiana sound.

Sam comes up trumps with the gorgeous "Give It Up To Love" to finish this wonderful overview of Sam's last 4 studio albums. The strength in this album is the wonderful playing of the musicians and the quality of the songs, many of which Sam wrote himself, which give this CD the real meaning of "Best of". If you've not been tempted to buy a Mighty Sam album before now is the time to acquaint yourself to a quality performer. Also if you ever get the chance to see Sam live do, as he has got one of the best touring bands in the world behind him. ---Dave Thomas, mnblues.com

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