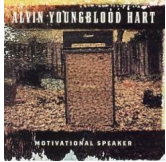


Alvin Youngblood Hart – Motivational Speaker (2005)

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01. *Big Mama's Door (Might Return)* 02. *Motivational Speaker* 03. *Stomp Dance* 04. *In My Time of Dying* 05. *Lawd I'm Just a Country Boy in This Great Big Freaky City* 06. *My World Is Round* 07. *Nobody's Fault but Mine* 08. *Shoot Me a Grin* 09. *The Worm* 10. *Necessary Roughness (A Power Move)* 11. *The Meanest Jukebox in Town* 12. *How Long Before I Change My Clothes* 13. *Shootout on I-55* Alvin Youngblood Hart- (Vocals, Guitar, Tambourine); Gary Rasmussen- (Vocals, Bass Guitar); Edward Michaels- (Drums, Percussion).

Bluesman Alvin Youngblood Hart's *Motivational Speaker* is his first outing since *Down in the Alley*, his stellar, acoustic collection of covers from 2002. Cut in Memphis with a very electric trio that includes Gary Rasmussen (former Rationals and Sonic's Rendezvous bassist) and drummer Ed Michaels, the album is a hard-edged, wooly, dirt-under-the-nails affair. Hart produced the set himself and brought in a number of guests including Jim and Luther Dickinson, Audley Freed, Richard Ford, Susan Marshall, Richard Rosenblatt, and Jim Spake. The album kicks off with a nasty redo of Hart's signature tune "Big Mama's Door," with slide guitars wrangling and popping before exploding into the title cut, another original that notches the volume level up two and pushes the raw, funky quotient through the roof. Hart's cover of "In My Time of Dying" is another traditional tune, reclaimed from Led Zeppelin (the first was "Gallow's Pole" on his debut). The sonics here are reminiscent of Neil Young & Crazy Horse until Hart begins to sing: his blues wail is emotionally taut, open, low and primal. Likewise, his own cover of Otis Redding's "Nobody's Fault but Mine" (Zep did it on *Presence*) features a raunchy horn section and scorches with its loose, almost unglued manner adding a whole new dimension. However, rather than merely being heard as a way to set the record straight, it is just as valid to listen to these tunes as a tribute to Led Zep. Despite his instinct for great covers -- including Paul Rodgers' "The Worm" and "How Long Before I Change My Clothes," or the reverent honky tonk read of Johnny Paycheck's "The Meanest Jukebox in Town," it's Hart's originals and the over-the-red-line attack this band plays them with that are the album's true standouts -- check the guitar freak-out on "Shoot Me a Grin" and the stomping, riff-heavy blues-rock of "Necessary Roughness." *Motivational Speaker* is a solid, rootsy raucous chapter in the unfolding saga of the era's most diverse bluesman. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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