Putumayo - American Blues (2003)

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01. - ARTHUR ADAMS & B.B. KING - Get Next To Me 02. - KEB' MO' - Hand It Over 03. -RUTH BROWN - Good Day For The Blues 04. - HENRY GRAY - How Could You Do It 05. -TAJ MAHAL - Cakewalk Into Town 06. - ROBERT CRAY & ALBERT COLLINS - She's Into Something 07. - SUGAR PIE DESANTO - Hello, San Francisco (Part I) 08. - RAFUL NEAL -Call Me Baby 09. - OTIS RUSH - I Got The Blues 10. - SUNPIE BARNS - Sunpie's Romp & Stomp 11. - ERIC BIBB - Needed Time 12. - CHRIS THOMAS KING - Why Blues 13. -SUSAN TEDESCHI - Just Won't Burn 14. - SOLOMON BURKE - None Of Us Are Free

Putumayo is to be congratulated for this roundup of, as they call them, "America's greatest contemporary blues artists." That statement is always going to be up for debate, but kudos for stepping beyond the big names to highlight some lesser-known, but equally important, talent. Arthur Adams, for example, has a wonderful voice that he uses smoothly on "Get Next to Me" (although B.B. King's solo fires the piece to a higher level). And some of the acoustic tracks are absolute joys, like Chris Thomas King's "Why Blues?" It would have been nice to have heard something more recent from Taj Mahal's extensive catalog than "Cakewalk into Town," which almost qualifies as vintage -- but it's still majestic. Ruth Brown, Sugar Pie DeSanto, and Susan Tedeschi show that women get the blues too, with Tedeschi firing off some stinging guitar. Whether Solomon Burke really qualifies as a blues singer is debatable -- to many he'll always be one of soul's kings -- but his voice remains an impressive vehicle. However, it's good to see Sunpie Barnes and Henry Gray get exposure. Perhaps next time they can extend their range to include people like Otis Taylor who are reinventing the meaning of the blues. But for now, this is a good job. ---Chris Nickson, Rovi

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