

Maria Muldaur - Good Time Music for Hard Times! (2009)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Diplomat* 2. *Shake Hands and Tell Me Goodbye* 3. *Shout You Cats* 4. *Ghost of St Louis Blues* 5. *Let It Simmer* 6. *Sweet Lovin' Ol' Soul* 7. *Medley: Life's Too Short/When Elephants Roost in Bamboo Trees* 8. *Garden of Joy* 9. *He Calls That Religion* 10. *I Ain't Gonna Marry* 11. *Bank Failure Blues* 12. *Panic Is On* Musicians: Maria Muldaur - vocals Taj Mahal - banjo, guitar John Sebastian - baritone guitar, six string banjo, guitar, harmonica David Grisman - mandolin, mandola, 'retro' banjo Fritz Richmond - jug (6) Kit Stovepipe - national guitar, jug, washboard Alex Anagnostopoulos - banjo (4), harmony vocals Suzy Thompson - fiddle Danny Caron - guitar Ruth Davies - bass Tim Eschelman - bass Bowen Brown - drums, percussion Pete Devine - percussion

Maria's returning to her roots and not a moment too soon. Before well-deserved Midnight at the Oasis fame, she was a member of the Even Dozen Jug Band, which also numbered John Sebastian and David Grisman...and if I have to explain who they are, you just might be at the wrong site. That estimable group was happy competition to Jim Kweskin and his juggers, so you know we're not talking about just any Haight-Ashbury street buskers here. For Good Time Music, she's rejoined by John and David and another name or two you might have heard about: Dan Hicks and Taj Mahal.

Over half the cuts are traditionals arranged by Maria, two are penned by Hicks, one's a Kweskin melody, and the remaining are standards. To add to the era's ambiance, Neil Osborne kicked in a Robert Crumb-esque trio of cartoons (with just a hint of Jim Grashow)...and Crumb's a huge fan of roots music, a musician in his own Cheap Suit Serenaders ensemble, so the stylistic cop was appropriate in more ways than one. 15 musicians in total appear on Good Time Music, and the sound is as full as a N'awleans street band highsteppin' and swingin' in a swozzled hot afternoon's shade tree gig.

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The songs are often relaxed and cool (Let It Simmer etc.) but get swingin' and jug-funky (The Diplomat) as well as mid-tempo'ed pickin' 'n grinnin' with an easy and confident air. Muldaur's in fine fettle, as ever, a natural whether she's tackling blues, gospel, or jug. The central backing unit is an up and coming band, the Crow Quill Night Owls, which boasts a cat who goes by the stage name of 'Kit Stovepipe' and who the chanteuse calls "the best ragtime player she's ever heard". Quite a compliment, but the band more than backs it up with the goods. And do I need to tell ya this is another great Stony Plain release? Probably not. I'm betting you guessed it about halfway in. --- acousticmusic.com

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