

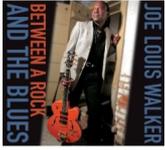
## Joe Louis Walker - Between A Rock And The Blues (2009)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 07 March 2011 09:26 - Last Updated Sunday, 07 March 2021 17:06

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- (3:57) 1. *I'm Tide*
- (3:50) 2. *Eyes Like A Cat*
- (4:58) 3. *Black Widow Spider*
- (6:41) 4. *If There's A Heaven*
- (4:23) 5. *Way Too Expensive*
- (5:33) 6. *I've Been Down*
- (4:08) 7. *Prisoner Of Misery*
- (7:34) 8. *Hallways*
- (5:43) 9. *Tell Me Why* [play](#)
- (7:21) 10. *Blackjack*
- (4:46) 11. *Big Fine Woman* [play](#)
- (4:17) 12. *Send You Back*

### Personnel:

Joe Louis Walker (vocals, electric guitar, 12-string guitar, slide guitar);

Sugar Ray Norcia (harp);

Doug James (saxophone);

Bruce Katz (piano, organ);

Jesse Williams (acoustic bass, electric bass);

Mark Teixeira (drums, percussion).

San Francisco blues guitar king Joe Louis Walker has been purveying his biting brand of West Coast blues since the '60s, with time off for good behavior (literally -- he spent years going "straight" attending school and playing gospel). On *Between a Rock and the Blues* he manages to keep one foot in the L.A. blues he grew up on (T-Bone Walker, Lowell Fulson, et al.) and the other in a more modern sound, both in his songwriting and his impassioned fretwork. On the likes of "Eyes Like a Cat" and "Way Too Expensive," Walker's seasoned band whips up a sassy, swinging, old-school jump blues feel, while "Tell Me Why" leans into a classic-sounding

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Chicago-style shuffle. Walker's voice, still lithe and clear at 58, rings out authoritatively over it all, and his concise, stinging guitar makes no apologies for asserting its dominion over all it surveys. An unplugged stab at Delta blues on "Send You Back" feels less convincing, but other cuts, such as album-opening "I'm Tide" [sic] and "If There's a Heaven" show off a crunchier, grittier, more rock-inflected guitar tone and a compositional sensibility to match. When Walker taps into this more modern-sounding mode, though, it's important to realize there's no pandering involved. Even though his roots go back way further, he didn't begin establishing his own sound as a solo recording artist until the '80s, so it's entirely natural for his style to have picked up some rock & roll attack along the way. Crucially, he never overdoes it, maintaining just the right balance between the understated and the in-your-face. He hasn't stopped growing as a songwriter either -- Walker's original tunes dominate the album, and they reveal both a strict avoidance of lyrical blues tropes and a knack for deftly inserting thoughtful observations in between burning riffs and gut-level grooves. ~J. Allen

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