Saffire – The Uppity Blues Women (1997)

1. Middle Aged Blues Boogie
2. Take It On Back
3. Annie's Blues *play*
4. Even Yuppies Get The Blues
5. Drown In My Own Tears *play*
6. Three Time Loser
7. Fess Up When You Mess Up
8. Silent Thunder In My Heart
9. School Teacher's Blues
10. I Almost Lost My Mind
11. Wild Women Don't Have The Blues

Personnel: Andra Faye McIntosh - Bass, Composer, Fiddle, Guitar, Mandolin, Vocals Ann Rabson - Composer, Guitar, Kazoo, Piano, Vocals Gaye Adegbalola - Composer, Guitar, Harmonica, Vocals

At one point in the early '90s, the ladies from Saffire just considered themselves blues historians, but since their performing career has gotten launched on the festival circuit, they've become much more than that. All three have developed into talented songwriters. Since blues fans are always looking for fresh themes or new twists on old themes, this trio is a sought-after club and festival act. The core members of the Virginia-based group include pianist Ann Rabson (b. April 12, 1945) and Gaye Adegbalola (b. March 21, 1944), and while the trio was accompanied for a while by bassist Earlene Lewis, she has since left the group. Lewis was replaced by mandolinist Andra Faye McIntosh, also from the Washington, D.C./Virginia area. Rabson worked as a computer programmer and Adegbalola was an award-winning teacher before they gave up their day jobs to play blues full-time for a living.

The group recorded eight albums for the Chicago-based Alligator Records label since 1990, and two of their '90s albums -- Cleaning House (1996) and Old, New, Borrowed & Blue (1994) -- showcase the trio's songwriting skills, although there are also a few covers, reinterpreted in their own distinctive way. These acoustic musicians inject a sense of humor into their songs and take it with them on-stage. There is also a strong thread of feminism running through Saffire and their recorded output. The group's other albums for Alligator include their 1990 debut, Saffire -- The Uppity Blues Women (1990), Hot Flash (1991), and Broadcasting (1992). Their prolific output as songwriters is matched only by their desire to tour, as they perform everywhere and anywhere, having already made several U.S., Canadian, and European tours. In 1998 the trio released Live and Uppity, a rousing document of their crowd-pleasing stage act. After a five-year layoff since their last studio recording (during which time Rabson recorded two solo records), Saffire returned with another strong record, Ain't Gonna Hush, in 2001. Havin' the Last Word appeared in 2009.

The group's fundamental appeal -- to growing numbers of music fans who don't know much about blues -- is their original songs and their ability to dig up and reinterpret old blues gems from the 1920s and '30s. They specialize in songs made by the sassy original blues divas including Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Memphis Minnie, and Ida Cox. --- Richard Skelly ,Rovi

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