

Tracy Nelson – Live From Cell Block D (2003)

Written by bluesever

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1. I Need All The Help I Can Get 2. Walkin' After Midnight 3. God Will 4. Got A New Truck [play](#)

5. Tennessee Blues 6. Send Me To The Electric Chair 7. After The Fire Is Gone [play](#)

8. Mother Earth 9. Strongest Weakness 10. Down So Low 11. Feel So Good

Personnel: Tracy Nelson (vocals, piano); Shane Stafford (guitar); Jim Spake (clarinet, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone); Scott Thompson (trumpet); Charlie Wood (piano, organ); Toni Schulster (electric bass); Vickie Carrico (background vocals); Brian Fullen (drums, background vocals).

Country-gospel-blues singer Tracy Nelson takes a cue from Johnny Cash and B.B. King by heading to prison to record her first live album. Few singers belt out songs with as much husky power and gutsy intensity as Nelson, and the surroundings lend themselves to performances of Memphis Slim's "Mother Earth" and Big Bill Broonzy's "I Feel So Good" that rank with her most impassioned work. A full band, including horns and a female backing vocalist, churns up exciting arrangements, and everyone seems to have been inspired by the audiences at these shows. Recorded in front of two separate crowds divided by gender, the enthusiastic response pushes Nelson and her band to superb heights. Guitarist Sam Stafford is particularly fiery, especially playing slide on "I Feel So Good." Incendiary versions of Patsy Cline's "Walkin' After Midnight" and Bessie Smith's "Send Me to the 'Lectric Chair," the latter obviously custom-picked for this audience, elicit a rowdy response that is channeled back into Nelson's set. Even run-of-the-mill swamp rockers such as "Be Good to Me Baby," "Strongest Weakness," and "Got a New Truck" -- the latter co-written with Marcia Ball -- are elevated by Nelson's attack. The straight-ahead country of "After the Fire Is Gone" turns into a near gospel frenzy, as does a cover of Lyle Lovett's partly humorous "God Will." There are few singers with a voice as naturally passionate as Tracy Nelson's, and none who effortlessly combine genres with such skill. The album makes a case for more live shows to be recorded in prisons, and is a worthy successor to those that already have been. --- Hal Horowitz, Living Blues

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