

## Janiva Magness - Stronger For It (2012)

Written by bluesever

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01 – *There It Is* 02 – *I Won't Cry* 03 – *Make It Rain* 04 – *Whistlin' in the Dark* 05 – *I'm Alive* 06 – *Ragged Company* 07 – *You Got What You Wanted* 08 – *I Don't Want to Do Wrong* 09 – *Thought I Knew You* 10 – *Dirty Water* 11 – *Things Left Undone* 12 – *Whoop and Holler*  
Janiva Magness – vocals, composer Zach Zunis – guitar Arlan Oscar - Hammond B3, melodica, piano Jim Alfredson - Hammond B3, keyboards, piano Gary Davenport – bass Dave Darling - bass, composer, guitars, piano, toy piano, vocals (background) Matt Teco – drums

Janiva Magness hasn't recorded any of her own compositions since she cut "Good Car" on *It Takes One to Know One*, her 1997 debut. Here she makes up for lost time with three compelling co-writes with producer David Darling. The tunes are some of the most potent on an album with no shortage of powerful material. There's a hint of Stax in the arrangement of "There It Is," the nasty kiss-off that opens the set. Darling's gritty guitar and Matt Teco's drums provide an ominous stomping rhythm to set off Magness' snarling vocal. When she sings, "I never thought I'd wanna hurt a man so bad," it sends chills down your spine. "I Won't Cry" visits the same heartbroken territory, but with a quiet intensity. Magness dips into her throaty mid-range to profess, "I get cut and I might bleed, but I won't cry." It's a great tag line supported by Darling's simmering lead and haunting B-3 by Arlan Oscar. "Whistling in the Dark" delivers more simmering Southern soul as Magness delivers the tale of a long-suffering spouse who knows the truth, but is unable to leave the relationship. The rest of the program is made up of her usual selection of well-chosen covers. "Make It Rain" from Tom Waits' *Real Gone* album is transformed into an old-time blues with Magness and Darling's guitar engaging a lively call and response. Magness shows off her range here, slipping from her growling mid-range up to a sorrowful shriek. On most of the album, she displays a muted, simmering side, delivering the bad news with understated intensity. Ike Turner's "You Got What You Wanted" uses a funky New Orleans rhythm to support a vocal that flips between rage and resignation. Grace Potter's "Ragged Company" is a quiet, introspective look at life's unpleasant truths, and Gladys Knight's "I Don't Wanna Do Wrong" is a slow, sexy R&B burner that delves into the dark allure of infidelity with a sinister groove and Magness delivering one of her most wrenching vocals. The album closes with Ray Wylie Hubbard's "Whoop and Holler," a gospel song that lives up to its

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title with the band supplying unrestrained whoops and handclaps to support Magness' jubilant vocal. --- j. poet, allmusic.com

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