## The Fabulous Thunderbirds - On The Verge (2013)

*01 – I Want To Believe 02 – Lovin' Time 03 – Too Much Water 04 – Hold Me 05 – Runnin' From The Blues 06 – Do You Know Who I Am 07 – Got To Bring It With You 08 – That's The Way We Roll 09 – Diamonds Won't Kiss Your Back 10 – Lonely Highway* Kim Wilson (vocals, harmonica); Mike Keller, Johnny Moeller (guitar); Morgan Price (saxophone); Kenny Rittenhouse, Liesl Whitaker (trumpet); Victor Barranco (trombone); Kevin Anker (keyboards); Jason Moeller (drums); Mark Merella (percussion); Christal Rheams, Caleb Green, Paige Martin, Daryl Duff (background vocals).

Perhaps it shouldn't be a surprise that a band so often defined by its guitarists takes on a different character once the lead singer -- the only constant in the group since its beginnings in the mid-'70s -- definitively asserts his status as the band's leader, yet the change within the Fabulous Thunderbirds that can be heard on On the Verge, their 12th official studio album, is striking. The last time the Thunderbirds released a studio album was in 2005, during a stint when the great Austin guitarist Nick Curran was the sparring partner of vocalist and T-Bird linchpin Kim Wilson. In 2013, guitarists Johnny Moeller and Mike Keller, talented axemen both, now support Wilson and they do get a chance to flaunt their gifts on On the Verge, but the focus is firmly on songs and rhythm. It is surely a soul-blues album, often copping the cool, relaxed Memphis groove and reaching down to the gritty funk of Muscle Shoals. This not only gives Wilson room to stretch vocally -- he's supple and sensitive on "Lovin' Time" -- but this means On the Verge is a richer, fuller album than many latter-day Thunderbirds albums, because this isn't just dedicated to slow, swaying seduction, there are wah-wah-fueled workouts, a bit of social protest, some jazzy flourishes, and, yes, a bit of the Texas blues that the T-Birds call their own. But what's striking about On the Verge isn't just the versatility, it's the ease: Kim Wilson doesn't sound desperate to stretch out; he's merely comfortable leading his band toward all the soulful sounds he's loved. The result is a thoroughly satisfying album, a long-delayed but very welcome flipside to the rollicking Painted On. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, allmusic.com

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