B.B. King - Live in Japan 1971 (1999)



01. Every Day I Have The Blues (2:10) *play*
02. How Blue Can You Get? (5:17)
03. Eyesight To The Blind (4:03)
04. Niji Baby (6:27)
05. You're Still My Woman (5:56)
06. Chains and Things (5:41)
07. Sweet Sixteen (6:00)
08. Hummingbird (4:08)
09. Darlin' You Know I Love You (4:26)
10. Japanese Boogie (9:17)
11. Jamming at Sankei Hall (9:35)
12. The Thrill Is Gone (5:36)
13. Hikari #88 (7:57) *play*

Personnel:
B.B. King - Guitar & Vocals
Ron Levy - Piano
Wilbert Freeman - Bass
Sonny Freeman - Drums
Earl Turbinton - Alto Sax
Louis Hubert - Tenor Sax
John Browning - Trumpet
Joseph Burton – Trombone

It took 28 years, but in 1999 Live in Japan finally became available outside of Japan Recorded at Sankei Hall in Tokyo on March 4 and 7, 1971, Live in Japan was originally released as a two-LP set in Japan. At the time, King's superb Live in Cook County Jail was a respectable seller for ABC, and the label also planned to release In London, so ABC felt that because a fair

amount of live King albums were coming out in the U.S. & Europe, it was best to release the Sankei Hall recording only in Japan. But many of King's American fans wanted it anyway, and collectors went out of their way to find imported copies of the double LP. Parts of Live in Japan did come out on various U.S. releases, but it was not released in its entirety in the U.S until this 1999 reissue. Backed by many of the same players heard on Live in Cook County Jail, King is in excellent form on spirited, gutsy performances of "The Thrill Is Gone" and "Sweet Sixteen" as well as Sonny Boy Williamson's "Eyesight To The Blind," Leon Russell's "Hummingbird," and Peter Chatman's "Every Day I Have The Blues." The instrumentals "Japanese Boogie" and "Jamming at Sankei Hall" give the band a chance to let loose and improvise, and "Lucille" (King's name for his guitar) gets in some passionate, inspired solos. Although Live at the Regal and Live in Cook County Jail are King's most essential live albums, Live in Japan is a fine CD that his fans will definitely want. ~ Alex Henderson

Recorded in 1971, but unreleased in the U.S. until 1999, B.B. King's Live in Japan deserves high marks for exuberance alone. Had Live in Cook County Jail not just jumped into the charts, this live album might have been released long ago. The recording opens with a swelling of enthusiastic cheers, as King launches into an uptempo "Every Day I Have the Blues." There are plenty of other classics here as well, including "How Blue Can You Get?", "Sweet Sixteen," and "The Thrill Is Gone" (which elicits another round of cheering from the opening notes). Live in Japan may not have the long-standing reputation of Cook County Jail or Live at the Regal, but it's an excellent album, with a decidedly different feel from these two classics. King's obvious enthusiasm for his music and for his audience is infectious, and you can hear the sheer joy of it in every note. And, for those who don't really feel that they need additional versions of well-known songs, let it be mentioned that Live in Japan contains King's only live rendition of "Hummingbird," not to mention a couple of unique jams ("Japanese Boogie," "Jamming at Sankei Hall," and "Hikari #88"). --Genevieve Williams

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