

Otis Taylor – Fantasizing About Being Black (2017)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Twelve String Mile* 4:08 2 *Walk On Water* 4:22 3 *Banjo Bam Bam* 3:36 4 *Hand On Your Stomach* 4:01 5 *Jump Jelly Belly* 3:55 6 *Tripping On This* 3:14 7 *D to E Blues* 3:29 8 *Jump Out Of Line* 4:08 9 *Just Want To Live With You Baby* 3:26 10 *Roll Down The Hill* 4:03 11 *Jump To Mexico* 4:19 Bass – Todd Edmunds Cornet – Ron Miles Drums – Larry Thompson Guitar – Brandon Niederauer Lap Steel Guitar – Jerry Douglas Violin – Anne Harris Vocals, Guitar, Banjo, Composed By – Otis Taylor

Otis Taylor stands alone among 21st century blues musicians in his fearlessness in redefining what the music means in modern society. He pushes forward, but he also has a deep knowledge of its history, and 2017's *Fantasizing About Being Black* draws upon the past to offer commentary of contemporary race relations in America. Taylor's 11 original compositions -- including four earlier tunes re-recorded for this record -- take stock of African American history, from slavery into the present, but there's a concentration of stories from the 20th century, including songs devoted to World War II and Civil Rights marchers. No matter the setting, the songs feel alive, an impressive achievement made all the more so because of how understated Taylor's delivery is. He's expanded the essential single-chord boogie of John Lee Hooker so it's become mesmerizing and open-ended, but this music isn't designed for passive listening. There's dramatic tension in its circular chords and its sparseness helps draw attention to his stories. Neither his music nor lyrics follow shopworn blues changes, but that's why they feel so vital: far from resting on clichés, Taylor recasts the blues and the history of Black America on *Fantasizing About Being Black* in a way that speaks to a new century, and the results are bracing. ---Stephen Thomas Erlewine, AllMusic Review

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