

Charles Walker - Soul Stirring Thing (2010)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Soul Stirring Thing* 4:42 2 *There Is Nothing I Can Do* 4:25 3 *That's A Lie* 4:21 4 *One Step Closer To The Blues* 4:25 5 *Magic Man* 4:07 6 *No More Tears For You* 4:43 7 *Third Time's A Charm* 3:39 8 *The House That Love Lives In* 5:57 9 *Tomorrow Night* 4:28 10 *San Diego Serenade* 3:28 11 *My Buddha* 5:34 12 *Time To Kill* 6:17 13 *The Danger Zone* 4:16 14 *Giant Switches* 5:48 Charles Walker - Primary Artist, Vocals, Vocals (Background) Billy Earheart - Organ Fred James - Guitar Mary-Ann Brandon - Vocals (Background)

Now that Charles Walker has reestablished himself on the funk/R&B scene as lead singer of the Dynamites, the gospel-charged singer takes a side road by recording this authentic old-school blues/soul set. It's helmed by veteran blues producer/musician Fred James, who plays all the instruments except for organ (Billy Earheart from the Amazing Rhythm Aces handles that) and pulled the project together. Often roots albums that rely heavily on overdubbed backing from a single musician can't escape a sterile feel at odds with the interactive concept of the organic sound so integral to the genre. Thankfully, James is a talented enough producer to keep the approach clean yet gritty, holding the listener's attention with Walker's deep Southern gospel attack. Add a batch of above average songs, many co-written by James, a few co-composed by Walker and a sweet and raw cover of an old Tom Waits chestnut ("San Diego Serenade") for an hour's worth of top-shelf soul that could have been recorded in the '70s. That's a high compliment for an album that clearly holds the moody urban music of that decade close to the hearts of the participants. James rescues his own slow blues "The House That Love Lives In" from an obscure Stan Webb solo album he worked on in 2001. But Walker gives it a new lease on life with a stunning, heart-stopping performance that's one of this disc's finest. Most of the material leans toward midtempo ballads, but the groove never gets repetitious due to Walker's striking singing and the overall quality of the songs. Luther Allison was scheduled to record Mary-Ann Brandon's "Time to Kill" before he passed, but was too ill to do so. It finally appears here and it's unlikely that even the great Allison could have pulled off a soul-searing performance of the social commentary tune as powerfully as Walker does. The opening title track, propelled by Earheart's Memphis-styled organ, perfectly lays down the classy R&B mood that never lets up for the remainder of the other 13 tracks. They show Charles Walker to be one of the finest, and perhaps most overlooked, practitioners of authentic soul-stirring music. --- Hal

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Horowitz, AllMusic Review

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