

Fantastic Negrito - The Last Days of Oakland (2016)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Intro - The Last Days Of Oakland* 0:35 2 *Working Poor* 4:01 3 *About A Bird* 3:40 4 *Scary Woman* 3:10 5 *Interlude - What Would You Do?* 1:20 6 *The Nigga Song* 3:16 7 *In The Pines* 4:19 8 *Hump Through The Winter* 3:54 9 *Lost In A Crowd* 5:00 10 *Interlude 2 - El Chileno* 0:41 11 *The Worst* 3:52 12 *Rant Rushmore* 5:01 13 *Nothing Without You* 4:15
Bass Guitar – Cornelius Mims Drums – Omar Maxwell Guitar – Masa Kohama Guitar [Additional] – Tomas Salcedo "The Chilean", Xavier Dphrepaulezz Percussion [Additional] – Piwie Piano [Additional] – Xavier Dphrepaulezz Piano, Organ – LJ Holoman Slide Guitar – Colin Linden Vocals, Drum Programming, Handclaps – Xavier Dphrepaulezz

Blues in the 21st century usually falls into two camps: hip revivalists raised on rock who are ready to shred and traditionalists content to confine the music on a narrow path. Fantastic Negrito -- the new persona of Xavier Dphrepaulezz, who previously pledged allegiance to Sly Stone in the '90s -- disregards this playbook by offering a fresh take on blues with his 2016 album, *The Last Days of Oakland*. The title alone pushes against the sweeping tides of gentrification and the album begins with a litany of what's good and bad within Oakland, a theme Fantastic Negrito touches upon throughout his album. Class and commerce aren't the only thing on his mind: *The Last Days of Oakland* teems with all the turmoil of urban life in 2016, a place where racial, financial, technological, and political tensions all threaten to explode. Fantastic Negrito isn't happy with certain classes being pushed to the margins but he's not pining for the past: he respects tradition -- a debt made explicit via a lithe cover of Lead Belly's "In the Pines," but heard throughout the album as he flits between jumping boogie, Dobro blues, flexible funk, and gospel -- but he uses the past as a way of framing the present. Certainly, his blues isn't limited to thundering riffs or guitar solos, but that doesn't mean that he resists the temptation of an overdriven six-string. "Hump Through the Winter" crunches with a color reminiscent of Led Zeppelin or, perhaps more accurately, Jack White or the Black Keys, a pair of millennial rockers whose blend of retro-tradition and modern sensibility is felt all through *The Last Days of Oakland*. What separates Fantastic Negrito from these 21st century peers is that he doubles down on funk and digitally erased cultural boundaries without losing a specific sense of self or place. There's a reason why this album is named after his hometown: it's an album about Oakland, just as it's an album about Xavier, yet this city by the Bay stands in for any other

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city in America, just as Fantastic Negrito speaks for anybody frustrated by the loss of humanity in this era of gentrifications. ---Stephen Thomas Erlewine, AllMusic Review

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