

Corey Harris - Mississippi To Mali (2003)

Written by bluesever

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01. Coahoma
02. Big Road Blues
03. Special Rider Blues
04. Tamalah
05. Back Atcha
06. Rokie
07. La Chanson Des Bozos
08. Mr. Turner
09. Cypress Grove
10. Station Blues
11. 44 Blues
12. Njarka
13. Charlene
14. Catfish Blues
15. Dark Was The Night, Cold Was The Ground

Personnel: Corey Harris (vocals, guitar); Ali Farka Toure (vocals, guitar, njarka); Ali Magassa (guitar, background vocals); Sharde Thomas (fife, background vocals); Bobby Rush (harmonica); Sam Carr (drums); Darrell Rose (djembe, sabar lam, bougrabou); Souleyman Kane (percussion, background vocals); Rising Star Fife & Drum Band.

Corey Harris is adept at combining contemporary sensibilities with traditional country blues forms in a manner so natural that the cracks and fissures between now and then never seem to show, an accomplishment he expands on Mississippi to Mali to include two continents. Again, the music flows so naturally that the bridges and welds that join the African and African-American traditions on this record are never obvious, creating a seamless, wonderful album. The tracks were recorded live in the field, an approach that strengthens the intimate feel here, and there are numerous high points, including Africanized versions of Skip James' "Cypress Grove Blues" and Robert Petway's "Catfish Blues" that open new dimensions in each song without altering its original intent and tone. A version of "Sitting on Top of the World"

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(called "Station Blues" here) with the Rising Star Fife and Drum Band, and featuring Shardé Thomas, the 12-year-old granddaughter of Othar Turner, is a particular delight in its ramshackle exuberance. Mississippi to Mali closes with a credible and moving take on Blind Willie Johnson's "Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground" that spotlights Harris' considerable acoustic slide skills. This is another fine album from a player whose reverence for the blues doesn't keep him from instilling the form with both joy and innovation. ---Steve Leggett, allmusic.com

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