

Etta James - The Right Time (1992)

Written by bluesever

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1 *I Sing The Blues* 2 *Love And Happiness* 3 *Evening Of Love* 4 *Wet Match* 5
You're Taking Up Another Man's Place 6 *Give It Up (Duet With Steve Winwood)* 7 *Let It
Rock* 8 *Ninety Nine And A Half (Won't Do)* 9 *You've Got Me* 10 *Nighttime Is The Right
Time* 11 *Down Home Blues* Alto Saxophone, Arranged By [Horns] – Hank Crawford
Baritone Saxophone – Jim Horn Bass – David Hood (tracks: 6, 10), Willie Weeks (tracks: 1 to
5, 7 to 9, 11) Drums – Roger Hawkins (tracks: 6, 10), Steve Ferrone (tracks: 1 to 5, 7 to 9, 11)
Electric Piano [Wurlitzer] – Clayton Ivey (tracks: 1, 2, 4, 6 to 8) Guitar – Jay Johnson (tracks: 7,
10, 11), Jimmy Johnson (tracks: 6, 10), Lucky Peterson (tracks: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 11), Steve
Cropper (tracks: 1 to 5, 7 to 9, 11), Will McFarlane (tracks: 6, 10) Organ – Lucky Peterson
Percussion – Tom Roady (tracks: 1, 2) Synthesizer – Frankie Crawford (tracks: 1 to 3, 5 to 11)
Tenor Saxophone – Harvey Thompson Trumpet – Gary Armstrong, Mike Haynes Vocals – Etta
James + Harmonica – Kirk "Jelly Roll" Johnson Acoustic Guitar – Will McFarlane Backing
Vocals – Cindy Walker, George Soule, Marie Lewey Vocals – Steve Winwood

There is no greater living blues singer than Etta James, and no producer more attuned to the right setting for a blues diva than Jerry Wexler. The recent collaboration between these two giants, *The Right Time*, is as spectacular an update of R&B as that statement suggests it would be. The album is overpowering in its stylistic force. Its material is drawn from an R&B treasure-trove dating back to early Atlantic sides and covering the history of Southern soul from Sixties Stax through Seventies Hi and Eighties Malaco. The result is a sound steeped in tradition but as fresh as a magnetic \$100 bill.

Wexler selected a who's who of session players for the project, resulting in a number of long-overdue reunions. The most significant reunion, though, is between the principals themselves. James and Wexler, who worked together once before, on the album *Deep in the Night* (1978), returned to the scene of some of their greatest musical moments: Muscle Shoals, Alabama. In the late Sixties, Wexler helped finance Muscle Shoals Sound Studios, where *The Right Time* was made. James was brought in to record at the studio by Marshall Chess shortly

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after Wexler stopped working there.

The Right Time features a horn section led by Hank Crawford and two basic rhythm sections — the Muscle Shoals house band (drummer Roger Hawkins, bassist David Hood and guitarist Jimmy Johnson) and one built around Stax legend Steve Cropper on guitar, with veterans Willie Weeks on bass and Steve Ferrone on drums. Both sections use arrangements supervised by Clayton Ivey, who augments his own keyboard work with organ and guitar backing from Lucky Peterson and synthesizer textures from Frankie Crawford.

Hank Crawford recaps his original performance as part of the Ray Charles band on “Nighttime Is the Right Time,” which James renders as if it were written for her. Steve Winwood’s duet with James on Allen Toussaint’s “Give It Up” reunites him with the Muscle Shoals rhythm section that backed him in the latter days of Traffic. Cropper, who wrote and played on the original “Ninety Nine and a Half,” by Wilson Pickett, pushes James to match the wicked Pickett thrill for thrill on her version.

James comes out blasting on the sultry “I Sing the Blues” and a cover of Al Green’s “Love and Happiness.” She stokes the fires of passion on “Wet Match” and kicks the party door in on “Down Home Blues.” Her gospel-influenced voice super-charges the seething ballads “Evening of Love,” “You’re Taking Up Another Man’s Place” and “You’ve Got Me.”

James caps off The Right Time by contributing a song, “Let It Rock,” that applies everything she knows about her craft to a contemporary setting. James laments a catalog of problems — from the conditions that led to the Los Angeles riots to “rock & roll that ain’t got no feel.” In the process she stamps herself as the indisputable queen of modern-day as well as traditional blues. ---John Swenson, rollingstone.com

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