John Lee Hooker - The Big Soul Of John Lee Hooker (1962)



01. Frisco (San Francisco)
02. Take a Look at Yourself
03. Send Me Your Pillow
04. She Shot Me Down
05. I Love Her
06. Old Time Shimmy
07. You Know I Love You
08. Big Soul
09. Good Rockin' Mama
10. Onions
11. No One Told Me
John Lee Hooker - Composer, Guitar, Vocals

There may not be much running time to this LP -- not even 30 minutes -- but John Lee Hooker gives us value for every second there is, and in a totally unexpected setting. Jumping into the R&B and soul explosions of the early '60s -- or at least dipping his toe into them -- he's backed here by the Vandellas, no less, on all but one of the 11 songs here. And coupled with an uncredited band that includes organ accompaniment, among other attributes that one doesn't usually associate with Hooker, he pulls it off. Indeed, he manages to straddle blues and soul far better than, say, Muddy Waters did during this same period; he's still a little too intense for the more pop side of the field, but he's also stretching the appeal of the blues with every nuance on this record, and there are a few cuts here, such as "Send Me Your Pillow" that would have fit on any of Hooker's far more traditional-sounding blues releases; and others, such as "She Shot Me Down" (a rewrite of "Boom Boom"), that are so close to his well-known standard repertory that they slip right into his output without explanation. And the whole album is short enough so that even if he would have gone wrong -- which he didn't -- there was only so far he could have gone wrong. As it is, this is near-essential listening as some of Hooker's most interesting work of the '60s. ---Bruce Eder, allmusic.com

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