

## Luther Allison - Bad News Is Coming (1973)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 16 March 2013 17:44 - Last Updated Friday, 23 April 2021 10:35

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*1 Little Red Rooster 4:09 2 Evil Is Going On 4:35 3 Raggedy and Dirty 3:38 4 Rock Me Baby 5:42 5 Bad News Is Coming 7:22 6 Cut You A-Loose 5:55 7 Dust My Broom 2:43 8 Stumble 2:19 9 Sweet Home Chicago 4:09 10 It's Been A Long Time 10:40 11 Take My Love 4:20* Luther Allison (vocals, guitar); Ray Goodman (guitar); Garfield Angove (harmonica); Paul White (piano); Andrew Smith (bass, drums).

The very thing that made Luther Allison noteworthy became an albatross around his neck. Years after his initial run of records in the '70s, he was known for the same thing he was at the time -- he was the only blues artist on Gordy, or any Motown affiliated label. This was true and novel, but many focused on the novelty, not the truth, ignoring Allison's status as a terrific torchbearer of raw Chicago blues. Some of material illustrates some contemporary influence -- dig that funky groove and organ on "Raggedy and Dirty," or the rock-oriented slow burn of Mel London's "Cut You A-Loose" -- but as his original title track illustrates, he can also deliver a torturous, impassioned slow grind. Still, this isn't an album about originality, it's a record how tradition can remain alive in a contemporary setting. Apart from the slightly cleaner production and the extended running time, this could have been released 15 years earlier, since its heart is in classic Chicago blues, particularly Chess. He draws on Willie Dixon via Howlin' Wolf for the first two tracks, dipping into Elmore James and B.B. King's catalogs later on in the record. This accounts for over half of the album's running time, and every one of these tunes are familiar -- and, for good measure, he dips into "Spoonful" on "Cut You A-Loose" -- but what matters is Allison's performance, which is never less than committed and usually gripping. And that's what makes this record work -- it's firmly on familiar territory, but Allison gives it his own personality through the sheer strength of his love for this music. Perhaps that doesn't make for a revolutionary debut -- it's not a visionary record the way, say, Magic Sam's *West Side Soul* is -- but that would come later. With *Bad News Is Coming*, Luther Allison just delivered one of the best straight-ahead Chicago blues records of the early '70s. Too bad everybody thought of it as a little folly on Motown. [Allison and producer Joe Peraino cut a lot of material during these sessions, and four of the best of these outtakes -- the original "It's Been a Long Time," plus versions of "The Stumble," "Sweet Home Chicago," and "Take My Love (I Want to Give It All to You)" -- appeared on Universal/Motown's excellent 2001 reissue. There's really no difference in

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quality with these cuts; they simply couldn't fit on the original, but thanks to the expanded time of a CD, there's four other first-class cuts to savor on this fine modern blues platter. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, allmusic.com

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