

Taj Mahal - The Real Thing (1971)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Fishin' Blues* - 2:58 02. *Ain't Gwine To Whistle Dixie (Any Mo')* - 9:11 03. *Sweet Mama Janisse* - 3:33 04. *Going Up To The Country And Paint My Mailbox Blue* - 3:24 05. *Big Kneed Gal* - 5:34 06. *You're Going To Need Somebody On Your Bond* - 6:14 07. *Tom And Sally Drake* - 3:39 08. *Diving Duck Blues* - 3:46 09. *John, Ain' It Hard* - 5:30 10. *She Caught The Katy And Left Me A Mule To Ride* - 4:08 11. *You Ain't No Street Walker Mama, Honey But I Sure Do Love The Way You Strut Your Stuff* - 18:54 Personnel: - Taj Mahal - vocals, acoustic and amplified harp, chromatic harmonica, National steel-bodied guitar, five-string guitar(banjo), Spirit of '76 six-holed fife - Howard Johnson - tuba (double B flat,F), flgelhorn, baritone saxophone, brass arrangements - Bob Stewart - tuba (doble C), flugelhorn, trumpet - Joseph Daley - tuba (double B flat), valve trombone - Earle McIntyre - tuba (E flat), bass trombone - Bill Rich - electric bass - John Simon - piano, electric piano - John Hall - electric guitar - Greg Thomas - drums - Kwasi "Rocky" DziDzournu - congas - David Robinson – producer

Taj Mahal's been chasing the blues around the world for years, but rarely with the passion, energy, and clarity he brought to his first three albums. Taj Mahal, *The Natch'l Blues* and *The Real Thing* are the sound of the artist, who was born in 1942, defining himself and his music. On his self-titled 1967 debut, he not only honors the sound of the Delta masters with his driving National steel guitar and hard vocal shout, but ladles in elements of rock and country with the help of guitarists Ry Cooder and the late Jessie Ed Davis. This approach is reinforced and broadened by *The Natch'l Blues*. What's most striking is Mahal's way of making even the oldest themes sound as if they're part of a new era. Not just through the vigor of his playing--relentlessly propulsive, yet stripped down compared with the six-string ornamentations of the original masters of country blues--but through his singing, which possesses a knowing insouciance distinct to post-Woodstock counterculture hipsters. It's the voice of an informed young man who knows he's offering something deep to an equally hip and receptive audience.

Soon, Mahal turned his multicultural vision of the blues even further outward. The live 1971 set,

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The Real Thing, finds him still carrying the Mississippi torch, while adding overt elements of jazz and Afro-Caribbean music to its flame. But it's overreaching. His band sounds under-rehearsed, and the arrangements seem more like rough outlines. Nonetheless, these albums set the stage for Mahal's career. (For a condensed version, try the fine The Best of Taj Mahal.) Today, he continues to make fine fusion albums, like 1999's Kulanjan, with Malian kora master Toumani Diabate, and less exciting but still eclectic recordings with his Phantom Blues Band. ---Editorial Reviews

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