

## Albert Cummings - Believe (2020)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)  
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1 *Hold On* 2 *Do What Mama Says* 3 *Red Rooster* 4 *Queen Of Mean* 5 *Crazy Love*  
6 *Get Out Of Here* 7 *My Babe* 8 *It's All Good* 9 *Going My Way* 10 *Call Me Crazy*  
11 *Me And My Guitar* Backing Vocals – Kimberlie Helton, Trinecia Butler Bass – Dave  
Smith Drums – Justin Holder Guitar, Vocals – Albert Cummings Keyboards – Clayton Ivey  
Saxophone – Ken Waters Trumpet – Brad Guin

This latest album by Massachusetts singer and guitarist Albert Cummings was recorded in Muscle Shoals, with the legendary Jim Gaines in the producer's chair, so there's little surprise that when it kicks off with a horn-laden cover of the Sam and Dave hit "Hold On (I'm Coming)" the resulting sound is big and rich and soulful, and Cummings does justice to the Sixties soul men in the vocal stakes. It's the first of several enjoyable songs of a soul-blues bent on *Believe*, but at the same time I'd venture to say it's indicative of how the album sometimes plays it safe.

On the one hand this collection of originals and covers features cracking stuff like the catchy "Queen Of Mean", with its "Take Me To The River"-like horn riff and stinging guitar from Cummings, and the bluesy dig of 'Call Me Crazy', all big ringing chords and a scrabbling, feedback-howling solo, with snappy lines like "You think I was born yesterday, but I stayed up late last night". But on the other it includes a pretty redundant cover of Little Walter's "My Babe", and a rather bland country-soul reading of Van Morrison's "Crazy Love". As covers go though, there's nothing "little" about his take on "Red Rooster", a slow-grinding chunk of R'n'B with Cummings' booming voice nodding towards the Howlin' Wolf original rather than the reedy Stones' version, and his guitar kicking in with an impressive solo that's full of tension, release and dynamics.

But Cummings really hits his stride in the home stretch. "Going My Way" is strong but subtle, with reverb-heavy guitar over a strolling rhythm, and stuttering, twanging licks strewn around

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casually. It's a good precursor to the wallop of the aforementioned "Call Me Crazy", and then the album-closing rendition of Freddie King's "Me And My Guitar", which has plenty of punch, a funky groove to engage one's butt, and a fleet-fingered, wah-wah inflected solo.

That closing trio of tracks would sit happily alongside any of Buddy Guy's recent output, and demonstrates the impact Albert Cummings is capable of delivering. Believe is an enjoyable album, but if the drive and swagger of its best moments had been maintained across the piece, it could have been a standout. ---Iain Cameron, bluesrockreview.com

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