

Leela James – A Change Is Gonna Come (2005)

Written by bluelover

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1. *Intro*
2. *Music* 3. *Good Time*
4. *Ghetto*
5. *Slappy Interlude*
6. *Soul Food*
7. *Rain*
8. *Married Interlude*
9. *When You Love Somebody*
10. *Mistreating Me*
11. *Don't Speak*
12. *Bummy Interlude*
13. *My Joy*
14. *It's Alright*
15. *Didn't I*
16. *Prayer*
17. *I Know I've Been Changed Interlude*
18. *A Change Is Gonna Come*
19. *Long Time Doming*

"Music," the first song and lead single from Leela James' first album, bemoans the death of music. She reminisces about Aretha, Gladys, Tina, and Chaka, and asks, "Can we just put the thongs away?" Her argument is flawed and tired. All four inspirations released new material during the early 2000s, and James is the latest in an extended line of artists, stretching from American Idol to any anonymous keyboard lounge on the East Coast, claiming to rescue real music. James should turn off BET and go to a record store: issue solved. The remainder of *A Change Is Gonna Come* -- named after the Sam Cooke song, covered here -- isn't nearly as nauseating, thankfully enough, even if it retains a nostalgic tint. James has the stature of a woman who should possess a squeaky voice, but she sings with demonstrative grit. More

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importantly, she doesn't see her inspirations merely as artists to mimic; she sees how they learned from the past and applied it to the present. The past is built upon (if only a little), rather than simply revisited. Kanye West, Raphael Saadiq, Chucky Thompson, and James Poyser are in on the action, giving James the kind of apt support she could've only imagined prior to recording the album. There's plenty of thematic range, whether there are blue lights in the basement, tears on the pillow, sweat on the dancefloor, or sun showers on the porch. Hopefully listeners won't hear all those names during "Music" and get the idea to listen to Lady Soul or Ask Rufus instead. ---Andy Kellman, AllMusic Review

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