Queen Esther – Gild the Black Lily (2021)

1.The Black Cowgirl Song 03:34 2.John the Revelator 03:34 3.The Whiskey Wouldn't Let Me Pray 03:02 4.Oleander 03:05 5.Take It To The Limit 04:38 6.Lonesome Road 02:29 7.This Yearning Thing 03:43 8.Our Dying Day 03:07 9.All That We Are 04:06 10.He Thinks I Still Care 02:37 11.Wishin' On The Cars 02:25 12.I Love You 03:23 13.The Whiskey Wouldn't Let Me Pray (Acoustic) 02:55 Queen Esther - vocals Hilliard Green - guitar, mandolin, steel guitar, bass guitar, backing vocals Ben Rubin - double bass + drum programming + Wurlitzer electric piano, organ and synthesizer Jeff McLaughlin - acoustic + electric guitar Greg Lewis - organ Shirazette Tinnin - drums

Gild The Black Lily's Black Americana sound was curated by Harlem-based vocalist, songwriter, musician, and producer Queen Esther. Her creative output musically is the culmination of several important Southern elements, not the least of which are years of recording and touring internationally as frontwoman for several projects with her mentor, harmolodic guitar icon James "Blood" Ulmer, including a stint in his seminal band Odyssey. Queen Esther was raised in Atlanta, Georgia and rooted in Charleston, South Carolina's culturally rich and enigmatic Lowcountry, a region with African traditions and Black folkways that span centuries and continue to inform her work. These 13 songs include originals from Queen Esther as well as covers from Son House, Chip Robinson of The Backsliders, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, The Eagles, and George Jones, with performances from guitarist Boo Reiners (Demolition String Band), bassist Hilliard Greene (Little Jimmy Scott), organist and Thelonious Monk specialist Gregory Lewis, guitarist Jeff McLaughlin and drummer Shirazette Tinnin. With each song, the Blackness that raised her moves steadily from The Old West (The Black Cowgirl Song) and the foundations of the Black church (John The Revelator) to heartbreak (He Thinks I Still Care) with soulful declarations (All That We Are) and country-rock reworked into black country soul (Take It To The Limit) and back again. Ultimately, the album illuminates other facets of the Black sonic experience. ---queenesther.bandcamp.com Queen Esther's fourth studio album Gild The Black Lily, highlights the gift of being an African-American woman willing to make daring, reclamation-driven musical navigations into unexpected sonic spaces. It audaciously succeeds at crafting a narrative thread from gospel blues vocalist Blind Willie Johnson to The Eagles' soft rock to her own heartwarming Black Americana. Notably, the album grows in distinction when Esther's artistry expands beyond her prodigious roots and profoundly connects with the listener's emotional core. Before 2021, defining who Queen Esther musically was and why she was great proved difficult for critics. The reason? For generations, the gift that is Black women performing America's foundational music was cursed by white men having significant levels of

pop-aimed mainstream dominance in the space. Thus, sounds that originated in the spirit of Black American femininity in the Antebellum era grew in renown as the timeless white American experience's embodiment. As a result, reviews of the Harlem-based Esther's melodic yet slyly robust vocal instrument are compared to everyone from Lucinda Williams and Melissa Etheridge to Sly Stone and Sheryl Crow, or Sarah Vaughn and Nina Simone. Thus, Queen Esther's work would receive polite, critical acclaim in a previous environment in the not-so-distant past. However, in the present musical and socio-cultural climate, a "Black Americana" roots-rock release does as much to celebrate history as it does to provoke a nuanced cultural conversation... ---Marcus K Dowling, partonandpearl.com

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