

Mississippi Fred McDowell – Live At The Gaslight (1971)

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CD1

Shake 'Em on Down (3:32)
Fred's Worried Blues (4:28)
Jesus on the Mainline (7:11)
Mercy (3:47)
When the Saints Go Marching In (2:41)
Someday Baby (4:08)
The Lovin' Blues (4:08)
White Lightnin' (5:15)
You Got to Move (3:03)
Louise (5:22)
Baby Please Don't Go (3:49)

CD2

Goin' to the River (Carry My Rocking Chair) (5:26)
Shake 'Em on Down (3:58)
61 Highway (5:37)
John Henry (5:23)
My Babe (3:26)
I'm Crazy About You Baby (4:55)
Red Cross Store Blues (4:15)
Levee Camp Blues (5:38)
Good Morning Little Schoolgirl (4:29)
Don't Mistreat Nobody (Cause You Got a Few Dimes) (4:55)
Get Right Church (4:22)
Good Night [Spoken Outro] (:20)
Line Up: Mississippi Fred McDowell - guitar, vocals Tom Pomposello - bass

Recorded on November 5, 1971, Live at the Gaslight stands as the final recording of Delta blues legend Mississippi Fred McDowell. The bottleneck guitarist was 67 years old when this

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album was cut, but his voice and playing show no signs of age and his passion and conviction seem to have strengthened with the years. At this point in McDowell's career he had shifted to playing electric slide guitar, and during this Gaslight performance he was also supported by sparse bass playing from Tom Pomposello. Accompanying McDowell's gruff voice, the guitar often seems to finish the singer's sentences for him; it's like listening to an old married couple. The setting is very intimate, allowing for friendly interaction with the audience and warm reactions to McDowell's occasional introductions and commentary. Throughout the two-disc set there is a real sense of inspiration as if the singer was releasing this music from his soul for the first time.

One of the first things McDowell admits is that he "don't play no rock & roll," but the raw power of even his soundcheck nearly contradicts that statement. While there are slight distractions on the first disc (an out-of-tune rendition of "When the Saints Go Marchin' In," a confusing tracklisting error on the back cover), there are certainly points of interest including the plaintive cry of "Baby Please Don't Go" and the righteous crunch of "You Got to Move." While the first CD has a few minor trouble spots, disc two really shines. The soulful moan of "Goin' to the River" blasts into the fiery punch of "Shake 'Em on Down," openly disputing his proclamation that he doesn't play rock & roll. The reverential conviction of "Good Mornin' Little Schoolgirl" precedes the last two songs, both inspirational numbers in true blues style: "Don't Mistreat Nobody" instructs his audience to be kind to their fellow man, and "Get Right Church" is almost a duet with his familiar bottleneck slide, chillingly foretelling his upcoming journey "home." Live at the Gaslight is a bright example of the raw power of Delta bottleneck blues by one of the genre's masters, and is not to be missed. ---Zac Johnson, Rovi

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