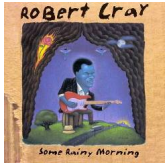


Robert Cray - Some Rainy Morning (1995)

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Robert Cray - Some Rainy Morning (1995)



1. Moan (Cray) 6:00 2. I'll Go On (Cray) 4:09 3. Steppin' Out (Randle/Grimes/Hall) 4:47
4. Never Mattered Much (Cray) 4:45 5. Tell the Landlord (Cray/Sevareid/Hayes) 4:51
6. Little Boy Big (Cray) 5:11 7. Enough for Me (Cray/Hayes) 6:20 8. Jealous Love
(Womack/Ousley) 4:12 9. Will You Think of Me (Cray/Pugh) 5:28 10. Holdin' On (Pugh)
6:31 Robert Cray vocals & guitar Jim Pugh organ & piano Karl Sevareid bass Kevin Hayes
drums

Typically well-produced and well-played outing -- mostly originals, with smoldering covers of Syl Johnson's "Steppin' Out" and Wilson Pickett's "Jealous Love" for good measure. Cray's crisp, concise guitar work and subtly soulful vocals remain honed to a sharp edge. ---Bill Dahl, Rovi

Since 1986, when *Strong Persuader* went platinum, Cray gradually has insulated himself from the pop world, settling instead for yearly blues Grammy awards. With every album, his goals seem to get more explicit: In an illustration on the cover of *Some Rainy Morning*, his skin is painted blue and he's sitting on a suitcase playing a guitar by a highway.

Many have lauded him for this return to pure blues, but for me it's a mixed blessing. I've always thought his voice -- not Jackie Wilson exactly, but that same pristine quality -- was suited for little bluesy pop songs.

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Still, there are moments on Some Rainy Morning, his ninth album, that make me forget all this categorizing and quibbling. The first track, "Moan," begins with an explosion of organ. Then Cray's spooky, repetitive guitar. Then Cray's voice, confessing that he doesn't feel so good because his baby's gone. Nice mood, unspectacular song -- so far.

Then comes the chorus: "Ah, ha, hai, hai, hi," Cray cries, wrenching the song from craft to soul. "All I do is cry." I believe him! Suddenly, "Moan" becomes tense, sad, even a little creepy. After this, Cray's typically crisp guitar solo is a bit of a letdown.

From then on the best moments on Some Rainy Morning come from the band and the grooves. Cray's rhythm guitar and Jim Pugh's organ (and sometimes piano) are so comfortable with each other, it's occasionally like hearing Booker T and the MGs. The upbeat piano that kicks off "Enough for Me" gives the song an "I Thank You" feel until Cray downshifts into a safer, contemporary mode.

The second best thing is Cray's voice. On "Will You Think of Me," Cray fluctuates smoothly from his neutral storyteller's voice to an aching falsetto. The slow "Little Boy Big," with its accompanying whistling, echoey guitar and sha-la-las, brings to mind Otis Redding's "(Sittin' on the) Dock of the Bay."

The formulaic quality occasionally threatens to poison some of the tracks. "Why didn't you come home last night?" Cray sings on "I'll Go On," "Why didn't you call me?" He has led us down this lonely road before with better results. And the obligatory guitar solos, always well played, sometimes seem unnecessary in the context of the song.

I admire Cray for sticking reverentially to tradition. But I wish he could -- like Bob Dylan or, heck, himself in 1986 -- fuse talent and tradition into something new and wonderful. --- Steve Knopper, bluesaccess.com

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