

Ruthie Foster □ – Let It Burn (2012)

Written by bluesever

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1 – *The Blind Boys Of Alabama Welcome Home* 2 – *Set Fire To The Rain* 3 – *This Time* 4 – *William Bell You Don't Miss Your Water* 5 – *Everlasting Night* 6 – *The Blind Boys Of Alabama Lord Remember Me* 7 – *Ring Of Fire* 8 – *Aim For The Heart* 9 – *It Makes No Difference* 10 – *The Blind Boys Of Alabama Long Time Gone* 11 – *Don't Want To Know* 12 – *If I Had A Hammer* 13 – *The Blind Boys Of Alabama The Titanic* Ruthie Foster Vocals Russell Batiste Drums William Bell Featured Artist The Blind Boys of Alabama Featured Artist, Dave Easley Pedal Steel Guitar George Porter, Jr. Bass (Electric) James Rivers Sax (Tenor), Saxophone Ike Stubblefield Hammond B3, Piano

One of the gospel-blues scene's best-kept secrets for over a decade, Texan singer/songwriter Ruthie Foster finally achieved some long-overdue mainstream recognition when her 2009 sixth studio effort, *The Truth According to Ruthie Foster*, picked up a Grammy nomination. By putting down the guitar and concentrating entirely on her vocals for the first time in her career, her follow-up, *Let It Burn*, suggests she means business. It's a wise move, as her impassioned, soulful tones have always been her main selling point, and backed by an impressive array of musicians, including the Meters' rhythm section and legendary gospel act the Blind Boys of Alabama, they're allowed the freedom to showcase their versatility, whether it's channeling the velvety smoothness of Anita Baker on the atmospheric blues of John Martyn's "Don't Want to Know," matching the power of Aretha Franklin on the a cappella rendition of early 20th century folk standard "The Titanic," or echoing the spiritual leanings of Carleen Anderson on the harmony-driven opener "Welcome Home." Alongside the groove-laden old-school R&B of "Aim for the Heart" and the pure gospel of "Lord Remember Me," the latter is the only original composition, but John Chelew's inspired production ensures there's still plenty of invention elsewhere. Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire" is rendered almost unrecognizable thanks to a gorgeously shimmering and reverb-laden arrangement, Pete Seeger's "If I Had a Hammer" is transformed into an authentic slice of New Orleans jazz, while Ike Stubblefield's rich organ riffs lend a hymnal quality to the likes of the Band's "It Makes No Difference" and the William Bell duet "You Don't Miss Your Water." Effortlessly classy covers of Adele's "Set Fire to the Rain" and the Black Keys' "Everlasting Light" show she isn't averse to more contemporary fare. But whichever era Foster picks and chooses from, *Let It Burn* always feels utterly timeless. ---Jon

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O'Brien, AllMusic Review

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