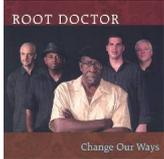


Root Doctor - Change Our Ways (2007)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 05 March 2016 16:55 -

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01. Blues Will Take Good Care Of You 02. Root Doctor 03. Keep Our Business Off The Streets 04. Give Me Love 05. Lucky One 06. People Say 07. Soul Shine 08. Big Blue Cadillac 09. Change Our Ways 10. I Wish It Would Rain Jim Alfredson - Horn Arrangements, Keyboards, Organ (Hammond), Piano, Tracking, Vocals Rick Bole - Drums Mark Byerly - Trumpet Freddie Cunningham - Vocals Lawrence Fratangelo - Percussion Bobby Jensen - Trumpet Keith Kaminski - Saxophone Diana Nagy - Vocals Greg Nagy - Guitar, Horn Arrangements, Producer, Vocals Yvette Robinson - Vocals James Williams - Bass, Vocals

Change Our Ways, the new CD from Root Doctor showed up in my mailbox yesterday afternoon. I've had a chance to listen to it twice, and I'm knocked out.

On paper, Root Doctor shouldn't really flip my switch. I prefer down home blues, and these guys are clearly more "uptown." My taste in R&B leans toward southern soul, while these guys clearly draw a lot from their Michigan predecessors. When it comes to jazz, I prefer the kind that borders on avant garde, while Root Doctor clearly has a fondness for the smoky, blues-based jazz of Jimmy Smith and Big John Patton.

So why do I like this record so much? Because it absolutely bristles with energy and intelligence. The band clearly has huge chops, and they're not afraid to show them off – but never at the expense of the music. The songwriting is strong and varied and the performances are polished but never sterile. There are hints of Albert King and the aforementioned Jimmy Smith, but also Solomon Burke, Percy Sledge and even Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels!

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Highlights abound on this beautifully produced and brilliantly programmed record. I'm particularly fond of "Give Me Love," which plays like a rousing R&B barnburner, but has a huge dose of country swagger to it. It's not hard to imagine Willie Nelson and his classic seventies band tackling this one. Another favorite is "Lucky One," co-written by our own Greg Nagy. This beautiful, gospel-drenched ballad would fit perfectly on one of Solomon Burke's recent comeback records. "Big Blue Cadillac" is a slab of deep funk featuring Greg's searing, Funkadelic-inspired guitar work and bruising horn work from the Motor City Horns.

Six of the ten tracks on Change Our Way are originals, but the four covers are no mere filler. Warren Haynes' beautiful "Soul Shine" is given an anthemic arrangement, complete with an Allman-esque intro by Greg. You can practically see the lighters waving in the dark during this one. But to me, the most stunning cover on the record is Root Doctor's goose bump-inducing take on the Temptations classic "I Wish It Would Rain." Its spare, piano-led arrangement is tastefully augmented by mournful cello and violin, while lead singer Freddie Cunningham delivers one of the most soulful vocals this side of Muscle Shoals. Absolutely stunning.

Very highly recommended. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm gonna give this thing a third spin . . . ---
Jeff Konkel, organissimo.org

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