Etta James – Matriarch of The Blues (2000)

01. Gotta Serve Somebody 6:50
02. Don't Let My Baby Ride 5:15
03. Rhymes 4:36
04. Try A Little Tenderness 4:46
05. Miss You 6:00
06. Hawg For Ya 3:44
07. You're Gonna Make Me Cry 6:18
08. Walking the Back Streets 7:08
09. Let's Straighten It Out 5:24
10. Born On The Bayou 4:41
11. Come Back Baby 5:56
12. Hound Dog 3:43

Etta James- (Vocals);
Bobby Murray, Josh Sklair, Leo Nocentelli- (Guitar);
Jimmy Z. Zavala- (Harmonica, Tenor & Baritone Saxophones);
Lee R. Thornburg- (Trumpet, Valve Trombone);
Tom Poole- (Trumpet);
David K. Matthews- (Piano);
Mike Finnigan- (Hammond B-3 Organ);
Sametto James- (bass);
Donto James- (Drums, Percussion);
Ross Locke- (Percussion, Background Vocals);
Goldman Redding- (Background Vocals).

Having long ago established herself among the royalty of modern blues, Queen Etta seems rather content to sit back on her throne and her laurels and coast through a collection of classic and contemporary compositions. Unfortunately, her descendant band appears equally happy to

sit back with her instead of working to shoot up the standards with another round of youthful vitality. The album opens with a rendition of Bob Dylan's "Gotta Serve Somebody" which serves more as a sleepy suggestion than a blues-injected imperative. While Al Green's "Rhymes" sounds very much like the Reverend, Etta's version of "Try a Little Tenderness" does phrase the slow dance in some subtly new directions. The real difference shows up about midway through when the Matriarch takes on the Glitter Twins with a raunchy slink through "Miss You" whose draggier pace and intermittent woofs gives the song that much more sex appeal. Otis Redding's "Hawg for Ya" slops with similar raunch. Ms. James does change things up with an educated and edifying stripped "Let's Straighten It Out" which builds musically as Etta lays down lessons of love and the woman's heart. Another exciting change is the funkification of John Fogerty's "Born on the Bayou" which strains the Clearwater through JB's "Hot Pants." After a gentle shout and sway through Brother Ray Charles' "Come Back Baby," the Queen retakes her throne while taking back her royal pet "Hound Dog" from the King with a swampy rendition of the Lieber and Stoller classic that appears to be more born on the bayou than that track. --- Matthew Robinson, allmusic.com

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