

Koko Taylor - Chicago Concert: An Audience With The Queen (1987)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 28 December 2009 12:36 - Last Updated Friday, 26 March 2021 20:31

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01. *Let the Good Times Roll*
02. *I'm a Woman*
03. *Going Back to Iuka*
04. *Devil's Gonna Have a Field Day*
05. *Find a Fool, Bump Her Head*
06. *I Cried Like a Baby*
07. *Come to Mama*
08. *I'd Rather Go Blind*
09. *Let Me Love You*
10. *Wang Dang Doodle*

Koko Taylor (vocals); Michael "Mr. Dynamite" Robinson, Eddie King (guitar); Jerry Murphy (bass); Clyde "Youngblood" Tyler, Jr. (drums).

She is the queen for sure, Chicago blues legend Koko Taylor, and she is in excellent form on this 1987 album, her first (and so far her only) live LP.

There are no big surprises here, but Taylor displays the versatility of her magnificent growl of a voice on a fine set of slow soul tunes, swaggering blues numbers, and driving R&B. And the band is very good as well...guitarists Michael Robinson and Eddie King are convincing without hogging the spotlight, and the rhythm section of bassist Jerry Murphy and drummer Clyde Tyler is excellent. I would have liked the two guitarists to hog that spotlight just a little bit more here and there, perhaps, but that's certainly a very minor complaint.

Most of these ten numbers are standards, but a couple of lesser-known songs attract special attention: Koko Taylor's own "The Devil's Gonna Have a Field Day", a gritty slow burner, is not

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available anywhere else but here, and neither are her versions of "Going Back to luka" and "Let Me Love You". The former is particularly mouth-watering; an irresistible mid-tempo blues shuffle with a great melody, a smouldering guitar solo, and a thundering syncopated drum beat a la Howlin' Wolf.

A gender-switched take on Bo Diddley's "I'm A Man" is a little bit awkward, perhaps, but not bad at all, and Taylor is firmly in the driver's seat with a tremendous growling performance of Ann Peebles' classic soul stomper "Come To Mama" and a thoroughly stylish reading of the soul classic "I'd Rather Go Blind". And it's great to hear this powerful live performance of one of the finest songs from Taylor's 1975 Alligator debut, Denise LaSalle's tough but supremely melodic "Find a Fool, Bump Her Head". The Merced Blue Notes recorded that one a long time ago, but Taylor's version has to be the toughest ever.

Changing Willie Dixon's "Let Me Love You" from a man's perspective to that of a woman introduces the interesting concept of a "minute-girl" (the original line was "a girl like you can make a minute-man change his mind"). Never met one of those, no sir. But the song swaggers along on the simple but highly effective guitar riff and the deep pocket of the drummer, and guitarist Michael "Mr Dynamite" Robinson (I think) plays some of the finest lead on the album.

This version of the recently deceased R&B legend Napoleon "Nappy" Brown's "I Cried Like a Baby" is simply one of Taylor's best slow blues, and the set ends with a swinging six-minute "Wang Dang Doodle", Koko Taylor's 1965 hit single. It is in fact very hard to spot anything resembling a weak moment on this fine, fine live album. The fidelity is very good, the production is excellent, not too sleek at all, and the material is uniformly excellent. Fans of Mrs Taylor, or of genuine Chicago blues in general, will not want to be without this one. It is one of the great live blues albums. --- Docendo Discimus, amazon.com

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