Blues & Soul Masters CD2 (2002)



1. When a man loves a woman - Sledge, Percy 2. Born under a bad sign - King, Albert 3. Think - Franklin, Aretha 4. Going to a go go - Robinson, Smokey 5. What I'd say - Charles, Ray 6. My guy - Wells, Mary 7. Under the boardwalk - Drifters (1) 8. Smokestack lightning - Howlin' Wolf 9. Dust my broom - James, Elmore 10. I'm gonna tear your playhouse down - Peebles, Ann 11. Private number - Clay, Judy & William Bell 12. I'll take you there - Staple Singers 13. Rainy night in Georgia - Benton, Brook 14. Thrill is gone - King, B.B. 15. Need your love so bad - Fleetwood Mac 16. Drift away - Gray, Dobie 17. High heel sneakers - Tucker, Tommy (1) 18. I'll be the other woman - Soul Children 19. Stand by me - King, Ben E. 20. Midnight train to Georgia - Knight, Gladys 21. Oh no not my baby - Brown, Maxine 22. Chains of love - Turner, 'Big' Joe (1) 23. If loving you is wrong I don't want to be right - Jackson, Millie

The compilation album just seems to go from strength to strength. Thanks for this can usually be laid at the door of a clever (or not so clever) marketing department, depending on your taste and gullibility. Once you can tap into a genre or give an old one a new spin, the compilation possibilities are endless - at least for the less-discerning music fan. Apart from tracking down lost underground gems on vinyl, there doesn't seem to be a point to them, except convenience.

So Warner had a poke around the archives (without getting too dusty) to furnish yet another compilation bereft of imagination. Sure there are plenty of classics here but if you guessed the track list before reading it you'd figure out most of what makes it on. For instance, did you get Booker T & The MG's 'Green Onions'? Muddy Waters 'Mannish Boy' or Otis Redding's '(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay'? No? What about Percy Sledge's 'When A Man Loves A Woman' or Ben E King's 'Stand By Me'. Probably the only good think about this album is that you get to hear some of last century's best divas belting out big soul hits like Nina Simone's powerful 'I Put A Spell On You' or Erma Franklin sounding like Janis Joplin on 'Take A Little Piece Of My Heart'.

Don't get me wrong; all are commendable classics but we're SICK of them. They've been done to death and who knows how many even more amazing tracks are gathering dust in the bowels of record company vaults. Why not tempt us with contemporary tracks we haven't heard before but are just as worthy? Warner Music must take credit for the excellent 'Natural High' compilations, so why not keep them coming? Most of the tracks here have been rotated more times than the earth - so why patronise listeners with jaded selections when this compilation could have exposed them to unknown music of the same or better caliber? And why no early James Brown? ---Sinéad Gleeson, rte.ie

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