LaVern Baker – Soul on Fire (1991)



01. Soul On Fire 02. Tomorrow Night play 03. Tweedle Dee 04. That's All I Need 05. Bop-Ting-A-Ling 06. Play It Fair 07. Jim Dandy 08. My Happiness Forever 09. Get Up, Get Up 10. Still 11. I Can??t Love You Enough 12. Jim Dandy Got 13. I Cried A Tear 14. Whipper Married Snapper 15. I Waited Too Long 16. Shake A Hand 17. How Often 18. You Said 19. Saved 20. See See Rider play

One of R&B's earliest divas, LaVern Baker could grab hold of a song and belt it out with the best of them, whether she was singing bouncy, up-tempo rock & roll or bluesy torch ballads. Baker's contributions to the rockin' and rollin' wing of '50s R&B were in a class with Atlantic labelmates Ruth Brown and the Clyde McPhatter-era Drifters, as the stellar 20-track compilation Soul on Fire: The Best of LaVern Baker proves. Baker had a muscular delivery and a commanding personality on record, so much so that her ravishing visual appeal wasn't even necessary (though it certainly didn't hurt). Here she bellows and growls her way through rock & roll standards like "Tweedlee Dee" (her first big hit), the oft-covered "Jim Dandy" (her only R&B chart-topper), and "See See Rider," not to mention Leiber & Stoller's gospel pastiche "Saved." But Baker was equally powerful on her slow numbers, turning in positively smoldering performances on the classics "Soul on Fire," "Play It Fair," "I Cried a Tear" (her biggest pop hit), and "I Waited Too Long," among others. Baker isn't as much of a household name as she probably ought to be, but Soul on Fire is required listening for anyone interested in the first waves of R&B and rock & roll. ---Steve Huey, allmusic.com

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