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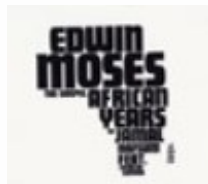
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Edwin Moses "The Gospel African Years" (Siesta 2006)



Mysterious Spanish collective serve up a faux historical offering with good results

Beginning like Pharaoh Sanders (all manner of chattering percussion followed by jazz chords on the piano) is going to alienate a large percentage of the Americana audience - their loss. This is followed by some Terylene falsetto Philly soul and then an electric piano driven ballad 'A Brand New Day.' With heavily accented vocals that are raised to sunshine by a gospel choir, things are getting interesting. The press release tells me that this was recorded in Spain, as close to Africa as Europe gets - it is probably also as close to seventies soul as Spain gets too. 'Be Free' is a joyous pre-disco soul replete with soaring strings and busy percussion.

Things take a strange turn with 'Keep Me Everyday' which is a reverb heavy folksong with a stripe of banjo, then a piano led piece of melancholy. 'Not So Bad' introduces the electric guitar in recognizable alt-country mode. This rock interlude doesn't last and they are soon back into cocktail hour lite-soul - imagine the Bluenotes with some skinny Spanish guy upfront instead of Harold Melvin. The schizophrenic duality of 70's soul and alt-country continues throughout the record and sometimes they cross-pollinate: 'Black Working Class' reminds me a lot of Orange Juice and 'African Revolution' jams folk right up against reggae and finds a very happy medium. Finishing with the spiritual gospel of 'Oh, Nafsum!' you forget the near absurdity of the huge power of a gospel choir pitted against an adequate white voice and like most of the record it runs counter to your intuition - it is so well done though that you can't help but admire the audacity and skill.

Date review added: Tuesday, September 19, 2006

Reviewer: David Cowling

Reviewers Rating: 6 out of 10

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