

FAME Review: Various Artists - America's Music Legacy: Gospel (DVD)



America's Music Legacy: Gospel

Various Artists

Quantum Leap Records - QLDVD 7183 (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
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There are few music forms on planet Earth more infectious than black gospel music when it clicks into high gear, and this DVD starts out with the rousing Andrae Crouch and his gorgeously arranged *Can't Nobody do Me like Jesus*. There's so much jazz and swing in the tune that it would've surprised no one to have seen heroin addicts and derelicts rushing through the doors, begging to be saved, falling to their knees and dancing on them. Seeing Crouch, the group, and the audience interact lets the viewer know why, while whites were dragging their heels and moaning about the impending weekend spiritual chore, blacks could hardly wait for Sunday and the preacher.

The America's Music Legacy project rescues a series of productions from 1985, all live performances (save for a few taped inclusions here and there) gathering together kindred genre stars for dynamic renditions of hits. Though the ebony side of the equation predominates, The Archers and other white groups deliver their versions of what was then beginning to be called 'contemporary Christian music', often with pronounced rock and pop elements. Remember the huge hit *Oh Happy Day* back in the days when dinosaurs roamed the Earth? That was the Hawkins Family and they're there as well, along with that chartbusting single. The first number they perform, however, shows they have the verve, snap, and pop of a joyous sound well galvanized in *I Feel Like Singing*.

Do you also remember another Godzilla hit, *Time has Come Today* by the Chamber Bros.? It's still regarded as one of the prime exponents in the psychedelic canon, yet the Bros. were just as at home with funk, blues, soul, rock, and gospel, the latter of which actually formed them as singers. Here, they appear as the Chambers Family a little before the immortal Linda Hopkins steps up and works her own magic. Mahalia Jackson, perhaps the most luminous name in the genre, likewise appears, and in Jackson and Hopkins, but especially in Hopkins, one sees where the glorious Aretha Franklin got a lot of her inspiration (do yourself an endless favor, reader, and sit down to her *Amazing Grace* release when you're done with this DVD).

Two hours worth here, brothers an' sisters, that's what you get, and by the time you're done, you'll know why what came after in the unfolding Christian music saga, as excellent as it may have been, doesn't quite hit the apogee represented here. Everything changed, and that's good, but there's a whole 'nother world in this document, and it bears investigation.

This is one two DVDs issued simultaneously in the America's Music Legacy project. For a review of the other disc, Country & Western ([here](#)).

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