



Fulton Blues

Corey Harris

Blues Boulevard Records - 250360

Available from *MVD Entertainment Group*.

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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Holy schlamoley, the opening horn fanfare to *Fulton Blues* practically blew me out of my seat (and that's not a good thing 'cause we critics have very delicate hineys)! Then Corey Harris came wailing in, and I decided to stay right there on the linoleum just in case the guy had any further surprises for my thirsty ears. But no, *Underground*, the secundus cut, turned out to be a killer stripped-down folk-blues number featuring just Harris and his gee-tar, a harkening back to the antebellum days when blues first arose. *J. Gilly Blues* carries that forward, adding in Hock Herrera's harmonica to fatten things up just a touch, add some bayou and nightshade. And by that trey cut, then, I knew I was in good hands.

Corey Harris embodies what I look to Bernie Pearl, old Peter Green, Taj Mahal, and others for: an extremely deep respect for blues qua blues, a full understanding that the art form is unique unto itself and needs to be preserved even amid all the highly enjoyable permutations which have occurred since its birth. To forsake such memorialization would be the same as forgetting whence rock and roll erupted (Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, etc.) and losing much by immersing only in modern wrinkles. Sooner or later, you lose the pathway. No fear of that here, though. Then there are the latterday applications, like that way funky horn section in *Tallahatchie*, very reminiscent of when Pee Wee Ellis worked with Van Morrison (and them horns get crazed in the gloriously sloppy-assed *Black Rag* later on in the CD).

The song is in fact an encrypted ode to the lynching of Emmett Till:

*Tallahatchie, well it ain't so deep and wide
In that river water where brother Emmett died
Muddy water flow
They killed little brother Emmett
Only the good Lord kows
Muddy water flow
Money town, where brother Emmett drown
Woman lied on my little brother
Then they hunt him down
Dirty dirty South
Brother, you better watch out
Tallahatchie, where brother Emmett drown*

...and that sort of thing is a sober harkening back to days this country would rather forget but will haunt us, as well it should, until we get our bedeviled multilateral soul in order.

From the git-go, Harris has been recognized, alongside Keb Mo and Alvin Youngblood Hart, as an important force in restoring acoustic guitar to the blues halfway through the 90s, and he was immediately picked up by the prestigious Alligator label. To my count, *Fulton Blues* is his 13th release, and guys like this have been inspirations to cats like Ry Cooder, Randy Newman, and a host of top shelf creatives precisely because they embody a sound that demands full commitment and a hell of a lot of woodshedding to arrive. Well, y'all, this is as post-Delta authentic as it gets, and if you miss *Fulton Blues*, don't cry to me when one day all you hear on the radio is Barry Manilow, Yanni, and Rod McKuen clones.

Track List:

- Crying Blues (Corey Harris)
- Underground (Corey Harris)
- J. Gilly Blues (Corey Harris)
- Black Woman Gates (Corey Harris)
- Tallahatchie (Harris / Whitley)
- Fulton Blues (Corey Harris)
- Devil Got My Woman (Skip James)
- House Negro Blues (Harris / Whitley)
- Black Rag (Corey Harris)
- Catfish Blues (Robert Petway)
- That Will Never Happen No More (Arthur Blake)
- Lynch Blues (Corey Harris)
- Maggie Walker Blues (Corey Harris)
- Fat Duck's Groove (Corey Harris)
- LIVE BONUS TRACK: Better Way (Harris / Reynolds)
- LIVE BONUS TRACK: Esta Loco (Harris / Whitley)

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