

ROBERT CRAY: In My Soul

Provogue Records PRD74362 (48:56)

You Move Me/ Nobody's Fault But Mine/ Fine Yesterday/ Your Good Thing Is About To End/ I Guess I'll Never Know/ Hold On/ What Would You Say/ Hip Tight Onions/ You're Everything/ Deep In My Soul/ Pillow

That master of cool, Robert Cray, is back with a very fine set of sophisticated blues, soul and r&b music, aided by Richard Cousins on bass, Les Falconer on drums and Dover Weinberg on the keys. Producer Steve Jordan, who has an illustrious career in music as a drummer and producer for B.B. King, Keith Richards, John Myer, Stevie Wonder etc, is reunited with Cray after having produced his 'Take Your Shoes Off' CD back in 2006.



Let's start off with the title track, 'Deep In My Soul'; it's a deep soul ballad written by Deadric Malone (aka Don Robey), having been previously recorded by the late Bobby Bland and which featured on his 1966 'Soul Of The Man' album. Well nobody is ever going to better Bobby's version at a time when he was smoking; Cray comes close though. The mournful sounding, constant horn riff throughout adds deep pathos to the song. Cray's vocal performance is deeply soulful and intense, and collectively with his guitar playing towards the end of the track, makes the number a goose bump-raising experience and shows the artist at the top of his game. Cray and company do another cover, Otis Redding's 'Nobody's Fault But Mine', which is set at a cracking pace with the horns blasting forth and Robert sharing vocals with Les Falconer; another winner of the set. The other cover is the Porter and Hayes' soulful and sorrowful sounding ballad, 'Your Good Thing Is About To End'. The horns sound magnificent on the number and once again Cray's vocal performance is superb; together taking the number to a couple of climaxes, and let's not forget Cray's intricate guitar lines that complement the number, rather than taking front stage.

As for the Cray originals, of which there are five, 'You Move Me' is set to a mid-paced chunky rhythm and features some up front guitar lines from the man. That he is a master of a sensitive soulful ballad is evident on 'Fine Yesterday', 'You're Everything' and 'What Would You Say', which has the artist making statements on how the world could be a better place for average folks, no more war and the need for more talking. 'Pillow Talk', listed as a bonus track, is another sophisticated and sensitive sounding soul outing with some delicate guitar lines adding to the atmosphere of the song. Richard Cousins brings two numbers to this feast of music; they are another fine soul ballad, 'Hold On', and the two minute instrumental rocking and reeling 'Hip Tight Onions'; initially organ led, it sounds like something from the fifties, before Cray comes in with some blistering guitar lines making the track sound more modern before it reverts back to its original format.

There was a time, mid-career, when Cray seemed to be stuck in the same old groove, but not anymore. His last few, and certainly last two albums including this disc, have shown a rejuvenated Cray full of vigour: this release, of subtle and classy music, being further testament to that.

Mike Stephenson