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Reviews

ELAINE NORWOOD - God Has A Way



ELAINE NORWOOD

Some soul veterans might well remember Leon "It's Got To Be Mellow" Haywood. In the 80s he disappeared off the radar before surfacing again in the 90s producing some blues recordings on his own Eve-Jim label. That label, it seems, has now spawned several subsidiaries of which True Vine is devoted to gospel and big-voiced Elaine Norwood is one of that label's mainstays. The lady, born and raised in Prentiss, Mississippi, has an impressive CV which includes work with Edwin Hawkins, Angela Winbush, the Isley Brothers and various, regular TV religious shows. Currently she ministers her Home Assembly Church in Los Angeles and if she preaches like she sings my guess is that her church will have no shortage of believers. The 11 tracker - produced by Leon Haywood and Keith Buckhalter - is a fine example of modern gospel music and for an indie label there's been no stinting on budgets. The album features real musicians (including Haywood on organ) and amongst the back-up singers there are people like Brenda Lee Eager, Will Wheaton and Peggy Blu. Believers will find their usual solace herein but soul people of lesser faith won't be disappointed either. Those who like to dance will enjoy the big reading of Rance Allen's 'Do Your Will', while on 'A Brighter Day Is Coming' and 'Taking Territory' the beats are tight and just right for modern room dancing. The bonus, though, is the plain fact that Ms. Norwood's faith ensures the vocal fully delivers in the real soul department - think prime time Gladys Knight. That comparison is self-evident on the Leon Haywood song 'True Vine' and an excellent version of Alicia Key's 'If I Ain't Got You' - that latter again proving that real soul and gospel are fruits of the self-same seed. If, by the way, you like your gospel with a live feel, then there's also an Elaine Norwood live set out there right now. It's 'Double Blessing' on another Haywood subsidiary, Highly Favoured Records. Anoraks should know that this one features Paul Jackson Junior on guitar and Lynn Fidmont, and Jim Gilstrap amongst the choir. CD Baby and other internet sources will provide more details on both albums.

(BB) 4/5

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