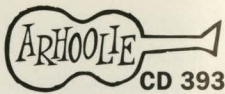


KATIE WEBSTER

"I Know That's Right"



1. I KNOW THAT'S RIGHT

(Katie Webster & John Lumsdaine) 3:45

2. JIMMY JIMMY (Katie Webster) 5:35

3. DON'T ACCUSE ME

(Katie Webster) 6:35

4. I WANT YOU TO LOVE ME

(J. West & A. Conroy) 6:30

5. KATIE'S BOOGIE WOOGIE

(Katie Webster) 2:25

6. MILLION DOLLAR SECRET/

SHAKE, RATTLE, AND ROLL (*)

(Helen Humes)/(Charles E. Calhoun) 8:58

7. WHEN SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH MY BABY

(Isaac Hayes & David Porter) 5:15 (*)

8. VODOO BLISS (Katie Webster) 4:50

9. BO JENKINS (Katie Webster) 6:50

10. JESUS LOVES ME / ONLY A LOOK (*)

(arr. by Katie Webster) 5:50

11. SNATCH IT AND GRAB IT

(Sharon A. Pease) 4:10

12. MISTY BLUE (*)

(B. Montgomery) 9:52

Total time: 71:48

(*) = Previously unissued

#1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11: recorded Jan. 8, 1985, at Bear West Studio, San Francisco, Calif.; Mark Needham, engineer. Remixed October 1992 by John Lumsdaine and Mike Cogan, at Bay Records Studios, Berkeley, Calif.

Katie Webster – vocal and piano; with

John Lumsdaine – guitar; **Clay Cotton** – organ;

Bruce Unsworth – tenor sax (solos on #1, 3) &

horn arrangements; **Nancy Wright** – tenor sax

(solos on #2, 4, 9); **Steve Ehrmann** – bass; **Steve**

Griffith – drums; **Jim Peterson** – saxophones on #11.

#5, 6, 7: **Katie Webster** – vocal and piano; live concert recorded by Chris Strachwitz, Nov. 30 & Dec. 1, 1984, at Concepts Cultural Gallery, Oakland, Calif.

#12 recorded live November 25, 1985, at the Arhoolie Records 25th Anniversary Party, Albany Veterans Memorial Hall, Albany, Calif. Recorded by Jaime Kibben. Personnel as for #1 above except: omit Cotton; add Danny Caron, 2nd guitar.

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Produced by Chris Strachwitz and John Lumsdaine

Cover by Wayne Pope

Cover photo by Chris Strachwitz

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Katie Webster

"I KNOW THAT'S RIGHT"

SOLO & WITH HOT LINKS



KATIE WEBSTER – “I Know That’s Right”

KATIE WEBSTER, the queen of swamp blues piano, has unfortunately remained a rather obscure figure throughout her prolific 30-year performing and recording career. Hers is a name that has cropped up frequently in European blues fanzines and in those painstaking discographies that come out of England. Her meaty piano supplied solid support on countless Bayou recordings of the '50s and '60s, including sides with Ashton Savoy, Guitar Junior (Lonnie Brooks), Big Chenier, Hop Wilson, Juke Boy Bonner, Mad Dog Sheffield, Clarence Garlow, Jimmy Wilson, Jay Stutes, Slim Harpo, Lazy Lester, Lonesome Sundown, Lightnin' Slim, Clifton Chenier and Warren Storm. Working for producers Eddie Shuler in Lake Charles, Louisiana and J.D. Miller in nearby Crowley, she served as a utility person who could be counted on to provide just the right backing for any style of music, be it blues, rock 'n roll, soul, country and western, Cajun or Zydeco. Webster even cut some 45s for Miller as a vocalist that appeared on the Decca, Rocko, Action, Spot and Zynn la-

bels. Yet few of her sides as a sideperson or as a featured artist were ever heard outside of Southwest Louisiana and East Texas, one of the few areas of the U.S. where regional musical genres still survive and enjoy a degree of popularity in the face of the electronic media's onslaught. When her tasty organ and piano playing did reach a mass audience through her work in the mid-'60s on Otis Redding's *Try a Little Tenderness* and Whiskey A Go Go live session, her name was omitted from the credits because she was under contract to Miller.

Webster was born Kathryn Jewel Thorne to a musical and religious family on January 9, 1939 in Houston. After moving east to Beaumont, she began her performing career, billed as “Big Mama Cat,” at age 13 with a group called Daniel and the Jazz Makers. Originally inspired by gospel music and Fats Domino records, she became intrigued by the haunting swamp sounds of Louisiana bands that passed through Beaumont. She would ride her bicycle to the Bon Ton Drive-In, operated by singer-guitarist Clarence “Bon Ton” Garlow, to such hear

musicians as Clifton Chenier and Ashton Savoy rehearse. “I liked the sound of the Louisiana blues,” Webster explains. “It was different from the way they played blues in Texas.” Continuing to inch east, step by step, both geographically and stylistically, she was working weekends in Lake Charles with Savoy's band by the time she was 14.

Having settled in Lake Charles and established herself as the Bayou's premier pianist, Webster signed a contract with J.D. Miller in 1960 but was permitted to continue working as a studio musician for other companies. When she wasn't busy in the studio, she spent much of her time performing at the Bamboo Club in Lake Charles. That's where Otis Redding spotted her one night in 1964. For the next three years, until his tragic death, she toured with the soul star as his keyboardist and opening act. “He said that I would always put a lot of fire behind him and really make him work hard,” she says of Redding. “The other opening acts would kinda softshoe because they didn't want him to think they were trying to steal the show. I was just doing what I'm known to do and that's just work hard. He liked that about

me, that I had the ability to get standing ovations before he would even get out on the stage. He really liked the idea of me pushing myself in order to get them ready for him.” Redding's admiration for Webster can be heard as he enthusiastically calls out her name numerous times between songs on the Whiskey A Go Go session master tapes. He was strongly interested in producing her as a recording artist, as he had with much success for Arthur Conley, but her contract with Miller prevented it.

Webster moved to Oakland, California in the late '70s in order to help care for her parents. After being contacted there by German promoter Norbert Hess, she finally began to move beyond the obscure legend status when she performed at the 1982 Blues and Boogie Woogie Festival in Bonn. It was the first of numerous European performances and today she puts in more time touring Europe than she spends at home in Oakland.

This record, cut in San Francisco on the eve of her 46th birthday, is Webster's fifth and, without a doubt, finest album. For the first time, her robust contralto voice was carefully recorded to capture all of its subtle

resonances and her driving, rock-solid piano playing hasn't sounded clearer on disc. Most of the selections contained herein are Webster originals and based on real-life experiences. The intensely soulful *Jimmy Jimmy*, for instance, is about a 17-year-old suitor who Webster, 20 at the time, turned away because of his youth, only to have second thoughts after he had returned to the country and it was too late.

Much credit for this album's artistic triumph must go to Hot Links, the band that accompanies Webster with down home, rocking pungency on all but a few selections. Organized in 1980 by guitarist John Lumsdaire, the group has become a popular club attraction in the Bay Area and along the West Coast through its spirited, highly danceable treatments of New Orleans R&B and other Louisiana styles. Hot Links, who have supported Webster on several club and festival dates during the past year, were her choice for the session. And an inspired choice it was, for this disc should do much to enhance Katie Webster's reputation as one of America's great rhythm and blues vocal and piano stylists.

(Lee Hildebrand — February 1985)

Co-Producer's Notes

In 1984 when we first met and played with her, Katie Webster had no U.S. albums in print, and was mostly known only to hard-core collectors and fans of Louisiana R&B — "them obscurities record boys," to use Snooks Eaglin's wonderful phrase. I was one of those "obscurities" fans: for years I had admired Katie's playing and singing on the old singles she had cut for J.D. Miller back in the '60s. I was excited when I learned that Icecube Slim (the Santa Cruz promoter who has done booking for Katie ever since) was starting to present her in some shows here on the West Coast, and I called him up to suggest that maybe my band Hot Links could do a show or two with her. We wound up playing with her in quite a few different concert and festival appearances in the summer and fall of '84. Playing the gigs together was fun and easy for all of us, and it was based on that experience that she suggested we back her in the studio, when Chris Strachwitz approached her about recording an album for Arhoolie.

Making the record was a fast, wild ride, as it often is recording with Chris! He

kindly listed me as producer on the original LP issue, but really my function was more that of bandleader and arranger; the production style and sound of the original session really reflected Chris' approach as a producer, more than mine.

As things worked out, by the time a studio date could be found that fit all our schedules, Katie was just about to leave for an extended tour of Europe. I spent two evenings with her going over song selections, combing through her huge repertoire for original songs of hers that weren't already known to her fans, and writing *I Know That's Right* with her when we decided we needed a rocking, upbeat blues number. We spent one evening rehearsing the material with the band, then went into the studio with one night to record before Katie's departure!

It was recording in the old down-home style: everything done live in one room, we'd do maybe two takes of a number and Chris would holler, "Yeah, that's it, that was great, move on, do another one!" He had told us we were just going to record 4 or 5 tunes for one side of the album; but after we'd done some takes of

those, he started suggesting more — songs that occurred to him, things he'd heard Katie play solo — and we'd hold onto our hats and try a run at those. It was a classic Chris session, all live feel and contagious energy; and we did get some nice numbers down that we hadn't planned on!

Chris' original plan for the album had been to include a few tunes with the band and also several numbers from some live solo gigs of Katie's that he'd recorded earlier at Concepts Cultural Gallery in Oakland. He ended up compiling the LP almost entirely from the studio material and using only one number from the Concepts gigs. This reissue, due to the greater length of the CD format, restores more of the balance he had originally intended, retaining all the studio recordings from the original LP (plus one out-take, the gospel number) but adding more of the concert material. It's a lot of fun to hear Katie tease the audience with sexy, funny numbers like Helen Humes' *Million Dollar Secret* and the Big Joe Turner hit *Shake, Rattle, and Roll*; and I also love her churchy, soulful vocal on the Sam & Dave classic, *When Something Is Wrong With My Baby*.

The studio recordings are almost all originals of Katie's, and frankly I think they include some of the strongest, most interesting songs she's ever done. They also showcase the really broad range of song styles, grooves, and emotions Katie can command, from aching, low-down, gutbucket blues like *I Want You to Love Me* to a flat-out funk feel in *Voodoo Bliss*. Dig her "jungle" vocal effects on the breakdown section of this one! *I Know That's Right* is straight-ahead '50s-style rock & roll. *Don't Accuse Me* is one of those classic south-Louisiana R&B ballads; *Bo Jenkins* shows off the salty blues-storytelling style that's such a feature of her live performances, and then builds to a really emotional climax. It's one of the ones we did spontaneously in the studio that night, and really has that "first take" feel.

Also done on the spur of the moment was the touching gospel number, *Jesus Loves Me/Only A Look*. Katie started singing it to herself during a break in the sessions, and a couple of band members joined in when we rolled the tape. Clay Cotton, who normally played piano on Hot Links gigs, moved over to organ for

this session, and he gets a lovely sound out of the Hammond B-3 on this number in particular. That organ sound also adds a wonderful gospel lilt to *Jimmy*, which has to be one of the most infectious things Katie's ever done. The song's got heartache in the lyrics, but something about the music just lifts you right up and makes you feel good.

The fun everybody was having in the studio that night is evoked by that bit of banter you hear at the beginning of *Snatch It and Grab It*, where Katie pretends to complain about being "locked up" in the isolation room with her piano. She carries that good-humored spirit right through her rollicking performance of this salty old number, originally popularized by Julia Lee in the late '40s.

We've also included a very unusual live performance from Katie's appearance at Arhoolie's 25th Anniversary concert in November of '85. It was an inspiring event, with many great bands and musicians playing, and something about the night brought out this extraordinary rendition from Katie. Actually, I believe it was partly inspired by the presence, there in the

crowd, of a relative of the old flame she sings about in the song. Anyway, whatever the cause, after we'd done a couple of numbers from the album, Katie, with no cue or warning to the band started into the rolling piano intro of *Misty Blue*, a song we had never played with her before! Katie then proceeded to deliver one of the most moving, heartfelt, deeply soulful vocal performances I've ever witnessed. It's a unique moment — she just pours the emotion out. *Misty Blue* also seems to provide a fascinating sequel or follow-up song to the bright, upbeat *Jimmy* early in the album — and in spite of some technical limitations in the tape, (Katie walked away from the mike and stood at the edge of the bandstand — just singing!), we wanted to share it with you. Katie's often talked about her days with Otis Redding; in this performance, she shows how powerfully she is able to carry on the deep Southern soul tradition. Straight from the heart — tell the truth — I know that's right!

Today, in 1992, I am again performing and recording with a band that goes by the name Hot Links. The present band bears some resemblance to the various groups

of that name which I led in the early 1980s — one of which is represented on this CD. The instrumentation is similar, and the style and repertoire show the strong influence of the New Orleans rhythm & blues tradition. But the present band is also very different from my old groups. It features a completely different group of players; it plays a lot of original material; and the arranging, grooves, and harmony singing are all much more developed. The early-'80s groups were all essentially versions of a good-time New Orleans-style party band or honky-tonk band. The Hot Links of the '90s, while retaining much of the same spirit, is making a very different type of contribution to the music.

(John Lumsdaine — 1992)

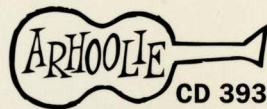
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