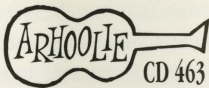


AUBREY GHENT & FRIENDS

"Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus"



1. **JUST A CLOSER WALK WITH THEE**
(PD, arranged by A. Ghent, Tradition Music Co./Mango Tone Music, BMI).
2. **CAN'T NOBODY DO ME LIKE JESUS**
(PD arranged by A. Ghent, Tradition Music Co./Mango Tone Music, BMI).
3. **AMAZING GRACE** (PD, arranged by A. Ghent,
Tradition Music Co./Mango Tone Music, BMI).
4. **I AM THINE, OH LORD** (PD arranged by A.
and L. Ghent, Tradition Music Co./Mango Tone Music, BMI).
5. **WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCH-
ING IN** (PD, arranged by A. Ghent, Tradition Music Co./Mango
Tone Music, BMI).
6. **SWEET, SWEET SPIRIT** (PD, arranged by T.
Barr and A. Ghent, Tradition Music Co./Mango Tone Music, BMI).
7. **WHAT HE'S DONE FOR ME**
(PD, arranged by A. Ghent, Tradition Music Co./Mango Tone Music, BMI).
8. **WALK WITH ME** (PD, arranged by A. Ghent, Tradition
Music Co./Mango Tone Music, BMI).
9. **THERE IS A FOUNTAIN FILLED
WITH BLOOD** (PD, arranged by Aubrey and Lori Ghent,
Tradition Music Co./Mango Tone Music, BMI).

10. **HOW GREAT THOU ART** (S.K. Hine,
arranged by A. Ghent, Tradition Music Co./Mango Tone Music, BMI).

Aubrey Ghent — steel guitar, vocals, & preaching
Lori Ghent & Tarlisha Barr — vocals
Andy Furgeson — keyboards
Edward "Gary" Williams — drums

Unless otherwise noted, all selections arranged by
A. Ghent (& T. Barr #6, & L. Ghent # 9) and © by
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administered by BUG Music Co. BMI).

Produced by Bob Stone
Executive producer: Chris Strachwitz
Recorded at Mirror Image Studio, Gainesville, FL.,
in May 1997
Ronny Cates - engineer
Cover photo © by Chris Strachwitz
Cover design by Wayne Pope

SACRED STEEL GUITARS Vol. 4

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SACRED STEEL GUITARS Vol. 4

Aubrey Ghent

& Friends

Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus



AUBREY GHENT & FRIENDS

"Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus"

Aubrey Valdis Ghent (pronounced "jent") was born in 1959 in Ft. Pierce, which lies about 100 miles north of Miami on Florida's Atlantic coast. About three weeks after he was born, his mother died from complications resulting from his birth. He was raised by his maternal grandparents, who were members of the Keith Dominion Holiness-Pentecostal church. Music is a very important element of Keith Dominion services, as it is in all Holiness Churches. By the time of Ghent's birth, the electric steel guitar had been used to "drive" Keith Dominion services for about twenty years. It was only natural that young Ghent would follow in the footsteps of his father, Rev. Henry Nelson, who was a renowned steel guitarist in the church.

Nelson had been influenced by Willie Eason, an itinerant steel guitarist and gospel singer who married Nelson's older sister, Alice. The first time Henry heard Eason play

was in 1940, at the Keith Dominion church his father, Bishop Willie E. Nelson, pastored in Ocala, Florida. Henry, who was ten at the time, was amazed as the dapper young Eason made his singing guitar almost say the words of a song. "I wanted to do everything I saw," Henry recalls. Bishop Nelson bought young Henry a lap steel and amplifier and blessed his son's hands. Before long Henry was playing in his father's church. He went on to be a major influence among Keith Dominion steel guitarists, establishing much of the churches' musical style for "praise" or "shout" music as well as a voice-like approach to accompanying hymns. He played soulfully for Keith Dominion services, revivals, and assemblies across the United States for more than half a century until a stroke in 1994 curtailed his road trips.

Ghent's musical gifts were recognized and supported by his maternal grandpar-

ents. They bought him his first electric guitar and amplifier when he was six. He wedged a large nail under the strings to raise them above the fretboard so he could make notes with a makeshift steel bar. Eventually his grandparents bought him a lap steel guitar. By the time he was nine, he was playing it in church. Making music for lengthy Keith Dominion services several times a week and practicing at home in between, he progressed quickly. "I burned out amps every six months," he recalls, laughing. By adolescence, Ghent had established a reputation as a virtuoso. The only time he has ever played secular music was during his years as a student at John Carroll Catholic High School in Ft. Pierce, where he played trombone in the school jazz band. "They learned about my talent and I would entertain the students at lunchtime." He would set up his steel in the gym. Fellow students would accompany him on bass and piano. "The whole cafeteria would just turn out, and they would come into the gymnasium."

As a young man, Ghent explored the modern pedal steel for a while. But he found it too heavy, hard to set up, and difficult to keep in

tune. More importantly, he felt that the complicated pedals and the ten-string neck interfered with his ability to directly connect with the Holy Spirit when he played. Today, Ghent takes pride in the variety of sounds and tonal colors he coaxes from his humble six-string instrument. His face assumes a smug grin when he talks about surprising pedal steel guitarists who have not heard him before.

Ghent is a versatile musician. For Holiness-Pentecostal services he can rattle the rafters with hard-driving praise music as he provides his own call-and-response by alternating phrases on the bass and treble strings while improvising a variety of syncopated, rocking strums. If a member of the congregation feels the Spirit and breaks into song spontaneously, Ghent will find the key in a flash and give the singer the backup needed to take everyone just a little higher on their spiritual journey (note the "live" in church recordings by Aubrey Ghent heard on Arhoolie CD 450: "Sacred Steel"). When it is time for a hymn or a contemporary gospel song, he gives his guitar a voice he describes as that of "a female opera singer." But Ghent's

“diva” has been keeping company with the likes of Aretha Franklin, Shirley Caesar and Mahalia Jackson. He is a master of the melisma; that device so often used by African American singers to improvise several musical syllables where the lyrics call for only one or two.

As renowned for steel guitar work as he is, among congregations Ghent is probably even better known as a gifted preacher. He is, in the words of his father, “doubly blessed.” He has served as State Evangelist as well as pastor for the Mt. Canaan Keith Dominion church in Ocala, where his grandfather had preached and his father had played steel guitar. The Reverend gives us a taste of his ministerial talents on “What He’s Done For Me”, during which his group became filled with the Spirit and “had church,” as they would say, in the recording studio.

Joining Reverend Ghent on this recording are two very talented singers: his lovely wife, Lori, and Tarlisha Barr. Their close harmonies on “I am Thine, Oh Lord” and “There is a Fountain Filled With Blood”

provide a refreshing complement to Ghent’s hot instrumentals. Andy Furgeson gives great support with his keyboard work. With a left hand like Andy’s, a bass would be superfluous. Edward “Gary” Williams, from nearby Vero Beach, lays down solid drumming, seasoned by years of playing for church services.

In the last few years Reverend Ghent has received a degree of national and international exposure. His performance credits include concerts with contemporary gospel stars Shirley Caesar, Albertina Walker, Inez Andrews, and Tremaine Hawkins; appearances at the National Folk Festival in Chattanooga, TN, and the Blues to Bop Festival in Lugano, Switzerland; and a performance, which he shared with his father, for the Smithsonian’s Folk Masters concert series at Wolf Trap.

This album contains a sample of Ghent’s versatile talent. All the recording was done “live,” without overdubs. To keep the music fresh and maximize the feeling conveyed by the musicians, there were few retakes. The good reverend and his friends serve-up a

delightful gospel feast: sizzling hot praise numbers; a tasty selection of gospel standards given fresh treatment; delicious, passionately played hymns; steaming spirituals; and fiery preaching.

Reverend Aubrey Ghent was the first African American steel guitarist I documented while working as a folklorist for the Florida Department of State in 1992. At that time, the tradition of African American sacred music played on the electric steel guitar was virtually unknown—even to gospel music experts—outside of the churches that supported it. That first visit to Ghent's apartment to hear him play permanently and radically changed my whole concept of steel guitar music. After listening to this album, the way you think about steel guitar music just might be changed, too.

(Robert Stone, Gainesville, FL)

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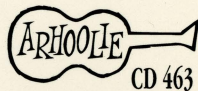
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