

# SOUL TRACKS

## Robert Cray

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***This Time***, the new record by Robert Cray, will likely be an opportunity to put the schizophrenic nature of the modern R&B fan on full display. Many of the fans who assail the record industry for not making music like they "used to," will summarily ignore this album because sounds a little bit too much like what "they" used to make. Some will say that it sounds too much like their grandparents' music. It's too bluesy or southern soul sounding. And of course, all that's a no-no - unless you're Jamie Lidell, Joss Stone or Corinne Bailey Rae. Then it's cool. But the hard-core fans of blues and soul music will love Cray's latest.

It's the hard-core fans of blues and soul that have been the source of Cray's longevity. Of course, Cray has had mainstream success. His best-known song, "Smoking Gun," reached number 22 on the Billboard top 100 in 1986. Those hard-core blues and soul fans in the US and Europe continue keep Cray busy. So busy, in fact, that Cray hasn't cut a studio album since 2005.

Cray's fans will welcome the singer's return to the studio with this fast paced and funky album of new material. Cray effectively wraps his raspy voice around tunes such as the blues infused lament "Chicken In the Kitchen," in which the singer uses the kitchen and food as a metaphor for a lover who doesn't seem to know - or appreciate the person who's buttering her bread.

The band breaks out the Hammond B 3 for the blues swinger "That's What Keeps Me Rockin'," which is the album's high point. With a driving bass line providing a swinging groove, Cray rises to the occasion vocally, and his solo guitar work is the perfect counterpoint for the improvisational work done on the organ. Cray also handles the vocals on the blues ballad "This Time" with ease. This song finds the singer imploring his lover to be honest about her intentions. "To Be True," is a mid-

tempo soul number that is infused with the Memphis sound, while funk oozes from the tune "Trouble and Pain."

***This Time*** goes fast. That is partly because Cray gives his listeners an entertaining mix of slow bluesy numbers, mid-tempo and high energy tunes. The record also contains nine songs, which just goes to show that a legendary talented artist who knows what to say and how to say it can do twice as much as most mere mortals in half the time. Highly Recommended.

***By Howard Dukes***