

TELARC

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LUTHER "GUITAR JUNIOR" JOHNSON TALKIN' ABOUT SOUL



On his third Telarc release, *Talkin' About Soul*, Luther "Guitar Junior" Johnson emerges as the bona fide leader of the West Side guitar style with his unique blend of blues, soul and funk. His incredible guitar riffs and plaintive vocals leave no doubt that this is Johnson's finest recording to date.

After serving his apprenticeship with Muddy Waters and Magic Sam, Luther has developed his own signature style characterized by a strong rhythmic component and deeply moving vocal phrasings. *Talkin' About Soul* contains seven original compositions by the heir apparent to the late Magic Sam's West Side throne.

"Guitar Junior" earned his moniker by performing a blistering blend of single string playing on the electric guitar augmented by powerful chordal accompaniment. His inspiration comes from a number of music's legends, including Muddy Waters, Ray Charles, B.B. King, Freddy King and Magic Sam, and he pays homage to each on this CD. His cover of Sam Cooke's "Somebody Have Mercy" is a not so subtle reminder of why Magic Sam immediately signed him upon hearing the teenage "Little Junior" sing this tune at a club on Chicago's West Side in the early '60s.

On *Talkin' About Soul*, Luther is joined by Brian Besesi (guitar), Kenny "Beedy Eyes" Smith (drums, percussion), Randy Lippincott (bass), David Maxwell (piano, organ), Jerry Portnoy (harmonica), Crispin Cioe (alto, tenor & baritone saxophones), Tom "Bones" Malone (trombone, trumpet) and Catherine Russell (backup vocals, percussion).

A native of Itta Bena, Mississippi, Johnson traveled north to Memphis at the age of fifteen and had the opportunity to see Muddy Waters performing on the legendary Beale Street scene. Soon afterwards, his family moved to Chicago in search of opportunity, and it was there that Luther honed his skills as a performer, singing, dancing and playing bass

guitar. After his stint with Magic Sam, Luther gained an international reputation as a guitarist and vocalist in Muddy Waters' band. His guitar soloing was hailed in performances in the U.S., Europe, Japan and Australia. By the late '70s it was time for Johnson to step out on his own and he released two albums for the French label Black and Blue. Stateside, he was featured on three of the Nighthawks' records and recorded four original tracks on Alligator Records' Living Chicago Blues, Volume 6 anthology.

No stranger to critical acclaim, "Guitar Junior" has captured numerous awards throughout his career. His rendition of "Walking the Dog," a live performance from the 1982 Montreux Festival's Blues Night, was included on the Atlantic Records collection Blues Explosion, an album that captured a Grammy Award in 1984. In 1999, Luther's second Telarc release, Got To Find A Way, was nominated for a Grammy Award in the category of Best Traditional Blues Album.

Talkin' About Soul is the guitarist's most mature statement about a life of "living the blues." While paying tribute to all of his former mentors and heroes, he manages to shine as a musician and singer with his own tale to tell.

Johnson's earlier Telarc recording include Got to Find a Way (CD-83445), released in 1998, and his 1996 Telarc debut, Slammin' on the West Side (CD-83389).