



VARIOUS ARTISTS – The Stax Story (Stax)

In 1996, I spent quite some time in the USA, the itinerary including visits to cities with a rich musical heritage. Memphis was a natural choice, bursting as it is with the blues, rock'n'roll, funk and soul. On my visit to Sun Studios, the young be-quiffed guide told me with regret and not a little anger that all that remained of the legendary Stax studio since its demolition shortly after closure in 1975, was a neon sign that now hung in the Rum Boogie Bar on Beale Street, the seat of the blues.

While I was chatting to a local bloke in that very bar, a white-haired man with cataracts tottered in chuckling, clutching a Bloody Mary. It was Rufus Thomas. In 1960, this man and Carla Thomas released '*Cause I Love You* - the very first release on Stax; the Motown of the South... and then some. Forty years later, that song and most of the 97 others that comprise *The Stax Story* still produce spinal quiverings and the unstoppable urges to wobble about or weep. With four discs (*The Hits, Kinda Blue, Finger-Snappin' Good and Live!*) and a lavish 66-page booklet, this is *not* cheap. But it *is* priceless.

How many compilations of such a size could you name where you feel as intimate with virtually the entire content as you do with *The Stax Story*? There are very few. This is essential stuff and it should appear on many Christmas lists. Dedicated to the preservation of the Stax legacy, the Soulsville Organization – a non-profit corporation formed in 1999 - plans to establish the Stax Museum of American Soul Music and to reconstruct the Stax building on it's original site, both acts of resurrection embarrassingly overdue. I hope these plans come to fruition, as I'll make a second pilgrimage to Memphis when that neon sign is back in its rightful home.

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