



Carole FREDERICKS
Springfield

Gospel music and the Blues are sisters in song. Both genres are the issue of the Negro Spirituals and both share worldwide popularity. If Gospel music sings of the grace of God, the Blues denotes the difficulties and challenges of life. They tell the same story, one from a secular point of view and the other from a spiritual perspective...both with genuine and often brutal honesty. There are lessons to be learned from each.

Every once in a while a voice will come along that reveals the depth of kinship between Gospel and Blues music. The late Carole Fredericks was such a voice. In 1996, she released the album **Springfield** as a testament to the intimate bond between Gospel, Blues and the human condition.

“In a music where the unexpected is not unusual and the curious can be common-place, how likely is it that the younger sister of a famous bluesman, who spoke only English until she was in her thirties, should relocate to Europe, become a big star in France and the francophone countries around the world, and eventually leave a musical legacy that has become a standard resource for teaching French? That is, of course, a potted biography of the remarkable Carole Fredericks – whose older brother, Henry St. Clair Fredericks, is better known to the blues world as Taj Mahal. Carole died too young in 2001.

‘Springfield’ was the first of her two solo albums, and was originally released in 1996. It is sung entirely in English, in case you were wondering, and revisits Carole’s roots – the title refers to the town where Carole and her family were raised. The music is tough-sounding blues, gospel and rhythm and blues – though no category is mutually exclusive here – showcasing Carole’s powerful singing or more intimate style. The approach can be strongly contemporary – try the driving ‘Jesus In Me’ – or classic southern-flavoured rhythm and blues such as ‘*Reason To Stay’. Then there is the straight-ahead blues. For an example of the latter, take a listen to ‘You Had It Comin’’, which has a guest appearance by Taj himself. There are elements of rock – ‘Run Away Love’ was unsurprisingly picked as a single at the time of the album’s original issue and also turns up on a movie soundtrack – but the blues has changed a lot over the last decade or so and what might have seemed too much in 1996 is now perfectly acceptable in 2009. Most of the accompanying musicians are French, though you would never guess it from the playing – but this is Carole’s showcase and she comes across as a “prophet without honor” whose memory should be far better known than it is.”

Norman Darwen, Blues On Stage Online Review, USA

<http://www.mnblues.com/cdreview/2009/carolefredericks-springfield-nd.html>

“I have said it before and I will say it again there is no musical instrument quite like the human voice. In the hands of an expert, it is an instrument without equal for power and emotion. ‘Springfield’, the first solo recording of the late Carole Fredericks is just such an incredible recording.

Tom Branson, Bluesrocker Online Review, USA <http://www.bluesrockers.ws/cf.html>

“Carole has a glorious voice and sings from the heart...The influences of Aretha Franklin and Mahalia Jackson can be heard throughout this fine album... A must buy for blues and gospel lovers.”

Dave Drury, Blues Matters Magazine, United Kingdom

“Reachin’ is a ass-kicking slab of testifying...while “Oh Happy Day” ... performed by Fredericks and the Lafayette Inspirational Ensemble, sans band, [is] a damn fine take on this song. Carole Fredericks was a superb singer and her early passing is a real tragedy...this CD is certainly worth investigating...”

Phil Wight, Blues & Rhythm, Magazine United Kingdom

