

# Mp3 Johnnie Johnson - Johnnie Be Eighty. And Still Bad!



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Johnnie's unique piano sound laid the foundation set the melody for the earliest and greatest rock and roll hits he wrote with Chuck Berry. An all original recording that captures the essence of Johnnie Johnson. Rock, blues, swing, it's all here. 6 MP3 Songs BLUES: Electric Blues, BLUES: Rockin' Blues

Details: Recorded near the end of 2004, this is the last recording from Rock Roll Hall Of Fame Legend Johnnie Johnson. This project, the manufactured cd, returned from the factory on April 12th, 2005. Johnnie passed the next morning, April 13th, unexpectedly. The first studio release from The Father Of Rock Roll in ten years is also his last. After a hospital stay in August September, Johnnie came back strong. Hale and hearty of spirit, he was in top playing form always ready to play. You can hear his heart all through this recording, Johnnie's performance leading a band of world class St. Louis musicians through all original material. Rock roll, blues, Johnnie's unique hybrid of jazz, swing, boogie woogie, laid on a foundation of blues gospel. At the age of 80, it is likely that Johnson knew this could be his last recorded statement. And it was a very personal project. Beach Weather is about Johnnie's life frame of mind, Lucky Four about Johnson's fourth wife. Find Me a Woman, A Good Day, people who know Johnnie would tell you those lyrics could fit him as well. The 2 hard blues, just listen to Johnnie on em. Johnnie's was the deepest blues. The blues is at the base of everything Johnnie played. Johnnie would take you all the way home. Nobody did a turn around like Johnnie Johnson. Johnnie would make the earth move every time. All the songs on the project were a collaboration between Johnson, producer Jeff Alexander, Rich McDonough. Mention must be given to the band. Rich McDonough is one of the finest guitar players on the scene today. His lead work through the 2 deep blues is exemplary, and his slide on Beach Weather is right on. The interplay between Johnson and McDonough through the entire recording is delightful, thrilling, and instructional. Gus Thornton's bass lines are tailor made for Johnnie Johnson,

noone sounds like Gus. He is the man. And Joe Pastor is a wonderful, intuitive drummer. Listen to former Blues Brother frontman Larry Tburston sing "The Blues Don't Knock" and you may start a petition to bring him out of retirement. And Victor Johnson is another guy who should be a household name. There was a lot of feeling here. Johnnie Be Eighty. And Still Bad! Johnnie's last statement. Recorded on home turf, outside St. Louis, live in the studio, with friends. \*\*\*\*\*

Peter Viney, Record Collector Magazine, June 2005 \*\*\*\* Rock and Roll Hall of Fame pianist Johnnie Johnson died in April, a few days before the release of this, his last album, Johnnie Be Eighty- And Still Bad! Johnnie Johnson led Chuck Berry's studio bands and he was the inspiration for Berry's song, and the original Johnny B. Goode. He also played with Albert King, Keith Richard, Bonnie Raitt, John Lee Hooker and Levon Helm. The new album was recorded in Missouri last December in collaboration with songwriter / producer Jeff Alexander. It's a warm recording of real music - everyone in one room, playing live, and with Larry Thurston taking five out of the six vocals. Johnnie's rolling piano leads the band through blues that are perfectly played. Beach Weather was written for him and takes up Johnnie's life story from its West Virginia origins to St. Louis. I'm an easy man, but I been around the block. I have eighty years, but buddy can I rock. The lyrics are full of good humour from the promise that I'll always wear clean pants in Find Me A Woman, to the guy who has to move because of his neighbour's wife in Better Sell My House- His wife got too much she wants to give. Maybe optimistic blues is a contradiction, but the warmth of the songs and music fit the description. At eighty, it's wonderful to have finished your last album in the words of A Good Day: I don't need to tell no stories, I don't need to tell no tales. You can see that I'm still standing. You can see that I ain't for sale. Johnnie Johnson was one of the great collabprators and sidemen. Appropriately, Keith Richard says he was led to him by Ian Stewart. Johnnie Be Eighty is a fitting final tribute. \*\*\*\*\* From The Liner Notes There are sounds that never leave you. To several generations of musicians and music lovers, the sound of Johnnie Johnson playing piano is such a sound. It is a unique sound that grabs hold of your soul, gets you moving and liberates any dark corner of you that might need liberating. Johnnie's signature combination of boogie woogie, swing, jazz, blues, gospel, stride piano, and his unique chopping bass, laid the foundation and set the melody for some of the earliest and greatest rock and roll songs. Almost all "from Maybellene all up to My Ding A Ling". I was tempted to title this recording Johnnie B. Gooder. The truth is, what Johnnie has accomplished since those days (since he and Chuck Berry wrote all the hits

they wrote) has been worthy of his talent. Johnnie was the leader of Albert King's rhythm section during King's most defining period. Just a few of the well known artists he has performed and or recorded with since then are Eric Clapton, Keith Richards, Buddy Guy, John Lee Hooker, Jay McShann, Koko Taylor, Aerosmith, and Bob Weirs Ratdog. There are sounds that never leave you. Johnnie's sound never left me. From School Days to Roll Over Beethoven, to the deep Delta blues he played on the early and deepest Albert King classics, to his solo work. But then I saw Johnnie live. I saw Johnnie guest on a few numbers at a Al Kooper show in NYC, and I was blown away. And I saw shows of his own in NYC to the same effect. Then in 1997, for the second time in my life, I moved to St Louis. At first I didnt get out a lot. But then in 1999 I got loose and seeing Johnnie perform in St. Louis was overwhelming, revelatory. And once I saw one show, I never missed another for a long time. Musical sounds are not necessarily geographically bound, and I have seen Johnnie with greats elsewhere. They took no prisoners and played for the gods to hear. But when I heard Johnnie at home, with the best St Louis musicians, nothing could top that for me. The feel in St Louis is just a little different. But worlds away. The sound never left me, and since then I have never stopped wanting to make a make a record with Johnnie Johnson. The sound of Johnnie's voice will never leave me. As much for what Johnnie says as for the quality of it's sound. It is elegant, strong, musical, proud, friendly and kind. Sometimes all at once. Like Johnnie himself. Driving Johnnie to the studio and him telling me about a donut shop we were nearing, where they had "these big old fluffy chocolate donuts". You could taste the donut yourself. Made me want to have one. And I did. Hearing about a gig another well known pianist got, and my saying that I enjoy him but rather hear Johnnie and Pinetop Perkins, and Johnnie saying: "I know what you mean. DELTA Players". Elegant, strong, musical, and emphatic. And he's right too. The deep blues of Johnnie Johnson's piano is a musical journey back in time , a syncopation and chords and melodies from the past. Although on certain kinds of blues you might hear jazz chords sneak in. Johnnie hears things different. This project came together real fast. I had previously recorded a spontaneous type project on which Johnnie guested on two songs. Since then I can't help but write with his piano playing in my brain. My knowing Johnnie and Frances precipitated my lyrics to "Beach Weather" and "Lucky Four". I explained this and proposed this project while we were eating in Sweetie Pie's Restaurant (owned by former Ikette Robbie Montgomery, and you want to taste their food). Johnnie and Frances said let's go. First the fork was removed from the side of my mouth, two weeks later we were back in the studio. From experience I knew

whom would walk in and do the job instantaneously. Gus Thornton is one of the finest bass players breathing, and has performed with Johnnie over a twenty some odd year stretch. Rich McDonough is a strong, creative guitarist, nonetheless, Rich is a feel player who I knew would "serve the music", as he puts it. Rich recommended Joe Pastor for the drum spot, and Joe's playing and attitude won me over immediately. I had the unit to interact with Johnnie and frame his unique abilities. I knew this band would go where Johnnie would go, feel, and accentuate Johnnie's playing, with musical sense. We had one short rehearsal and went in to record. I chose a place a distance from town. It was a long ride out to the studio. We walked in, Johnnie walked straight to the piano, sat down, and hardly ever left that spot the rest of the day. Happy at his piano. Had his coffeee and a burger right off, at his piano. While everyone was setting up, last minute stuff being dealt with, and the general goofing around and chaos ensued, Johnnie manned his station. Happy at his piano. And that was pretty much how it was the next six plus hours. Sat up straight as an arrow all day. Hardly ever left that piano. It did not matter what was happening, Johnnie let us work out our stuff, and when we were right, he was ready. And played his eighty year old ass off. Smiling when he was playing. What you hear recorded is real music. Like the old days. Everyone in one room. Johnnie's performance leading the band, his unique and varied senses of time and melody dictating where each song would go. The musicians understanding. The music was cut live. The vocals were complete takes. The first time I heard Larry Thurston sing he was performing with Johnnie, indeed, they and Gus have performed together going back over twenty years. Larry quickly became one of my all time favorite singers. Victor Johnson is another of my favorite singers. Victor was the perfect interpreter for the vocal he contributes to this project. Johnnie's piano and these musicians and vocalists belong together like a beautiful woman and a sheer negligee. And yes, Johnnie's playing is otherworldly. That beauty you hear in Johnnie's playing comes from inside Johnnie. It is, as he puts it, a gift from God, the beauty inherent in the man. The playfulness, that is Johnnie. Trust me, he is a joker. The deep blues, comes from spending a good part of his growing up years in the South. But there is something else that you may not be able to hear, and that is the decency in Johnnie Johnson. The music will speak for itself, but I'm gonna tell you a little something about Johnnie Johnson the man. Lord knows Johnnie never was a saint, but if he is anything, he is decent and regular to people. Always considerate of everyone feeling at home and comfortable. There is more to this record than just music. This recording has also secretly captured trust and friendship. You don't have to be a star or a celebrity for Johnnie to be

your friend. You just have to be decent and honest. This recording has captured the capacity of Johnnie to trust and befriend everyday people; the trust that Johnnie and Frances placed in me and our friendship when they allowed me the opportunity to complete these songs and make this record with and for Johnnie. And that is a shot that I don't know of another Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Member giving to a sophomore record maker without a label behind him. But it tells you something about Johnnie Johnson. He does not think he's too good for or better than the average Joe. Johnnie is proud of his playing and his accomplishments, but he knows his blood is red, and that he breathes the same air as the rest of us. And he lives that way. And listen to that man play that piano! Johnnie Johnson. Johnnie Be Eighty. And Still Bad! Jeff Alexander \*\*\*\*\* Credits: Johnnie Johnson: Piano Gus Thornton: Bass. Has toured and recorded with Albert King, Stevie Ray Vaughan (4 albums), Katie Webster, and has performed with Johnnie Johnson over a 20 year stretch. Rich McDonough : Guitar. And incredible musician, Rich is one of the finest feel players going, and a quick study. Collaborator on 5 of the songs with Johnnie Johnson and Jeff Alexander. Joe Pastor: Drummer Joe. A wonderful drummer, in just about every style of music. Larry Thurston: Vocals tracks 1 - 4, and 6. Former frontman for the Matt Murphy Band and The Blues Brothers Band, Larry is one of the strongest performers out there. Just listen to "The Blues Don't Knock" all the way through one time, and you will see what I mean Victor Johnson: Vocal, track 5. Possessed of a unique voice, Victor turned in a wonderful performance which will have blues fans more than a little spooked.

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