

Mp3 Linda Hopkins - The Living Legend Live!

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The Tony award-winning living legend of the blues captured live in concert at Hollywood's famed Catalina Bar Grill. 11 MP3 Songs BLUES: Blues Vocals, BLUES: Rhythm Blues Details: Outside the living room window of Linda Hopkins' Hollywood penthouse, the stressing strains of 101 freeway traffic bleed into the summer breeze, spurring her drapery sheers to shimmy like a 30's vintage shake dancer. Through their soft-focus scrim, the afternoon sun illuminates her sitting room's immaculate clutter, providing just the right light for an awestruck visitor to ponder her possessions. Near her ol' upright piano are photos of the lady with a galaxy of golden era entertainers. There's sheet music, show posters, and a trade magazine ad for her Savoy single "Warning Blues." And then there are the plaques -- row after row of commemorations, proclamations, and citations -- all giving honor and thanks to a Black woman who happily gave of herself to her community. There are so many awards that the excess is stacked along the walls. This is not the home of a faded Tinsel Town star. This is the home of a beloved Los Angeles treasure. Born (1924) and raised in New Orleans, Linda ran away to live with her brother in Richmond, California in 1947 after the love of her life married another woman. An in-demand vocalist from the time she was a child, Linda had sung nothing but gospel. But white disc jockey "Jumpin' George" Oxford, who was taken with her voice from Sunday gospel radio shows, set up an audition for her at Slim Jenkins' nightclub in Oakland, changing her path forever. "I never dreamed I'd be in show business," she says wide-eyed, in a voice high-pitched with rural animation. "I auditioned during the Sunday evening cocktail hour with Willie Diamond The Dominos' '60 Minute Man' - the only secular song I knew. I got a standing ovation. I didn't know anything else...so I sang it again! That Monday, Slim called me for the job and I had to learn five more songs by Friday!" This was January 6, 1950. "The first person I worked with was Helen Humes," she continues. "On opening night she insisted on opening for me, hollerin', 'YOU are the star of the show tonight!' By day, I was a house cleaner for Miz Montleone, a very rich white lady who loaned me some gowns to wear. Between her and "Jumpin' George" calling all their friends, you couldn't get in the place. Helen had invited Nellie Lutcher and members of Count Basie's, Duke Ellington's and Nat Cole's bands. Slim had to go to the gambling joint next door for more chairs! I made \$10 that night - big money

then - and stayed for almost a year. When I left, I was making \$100 for three night's work! Then I moved to the Champagne Supper Club in San Francisco to work with Redd Foxx." Fifty-six years and a whole lot of history later, Ms. Hopkins took the stage at the renowned Hollywood jazz supper club, Catalina Bar Grill, for two SRO shows, conjuring precious memories from golden eras gone by. To get things jumpin', Linda chose Louis Jordan's 1946 party starter "Let the Good Times Roll." "I only got to work with Louis one time in San Francisco," she remembers, "but to this day, his wife Martha always tells me, 'My husband really liked you!'" "Let The Good Times Roll" later became a pop hit in 1960 for Ray Charles, a longtime friend of Linda's. Since his passing, Linda has dedicated the second half of her stage show Wild Women Blues to his memory. She sang two of those songs at Catalina's: "Georgia On My Mind" and a searing rendition of "Drown in My Own Tears." Linda also sang ZZ Hill's classic "Down Home Blues" and closed the show with her buddy Michael Konik on "Every Day I Have the Blues," the signature song of another departed friend, Joe Williams. "I like to sing men's songs," she shares. "My voice is heavier so they suit me better. Don't get me wrong. I love Aretha, Patti LaBelle and Tina Turner. And Della Reese and Nancy Wilson are my mentors. But they do their songs so good to where I just leave em alone!" Linda gets a few licks in from a female point of view on her "dirty" ditties "Steppin' Out" and the notorious "Meet Me With Your Black Drawers On," the latter from the pen of husband and wife team Jimmy Jeannie Cheatham. "I wrote my own verses for those," Linda says with wicked pride. "The writers love that I made em my own and wanted me to record em that way." Ms. Hopkins also includes her bluesy recitation "Deep in the Night" from the Broadway show for which she earned her coveted Tony Award, Inner City. The deepest touchstone, however, is "Evil Gal Blues," on which Linda tips her hat to the great Dinah Washington. "That was my buddy," she exclaims! "She was with the Roberta Martin Singers out of Chicago when I was with the Southern Harp Spiritual Singers who did concerts together. She used her real name back then: Ruth Jones. Dinah got into show business before me. When she found out I 'crossed over,' she had a trunk full of her old gowns sent to my doorstep." Coming full circle, Linda continues to sing gospel and blues to packed houses, for which the great Mahalia Jackson once chastised her. Linda stands by her way of making a living. "I go to church every Sunday," she testifies, "and everywhere I go -- Switzerland, Germany, France, Austria, Italy -- I talk about my church. So when they come here, they wants to go! And I take em to church before I take em to any nightclub. There are people to this day who belong to my church because I brought them there." Such are the ways of an

ageless woman that friends call The Kid, a legend who paid the dues to sing the blues AND some gospel, too. Della Reese will tell you: "Any time Linda Hopkins opens her mouth to sing, what you hear is one-hundred-percent real." - A. Scott Galloway August 2006

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