

Created by: Debra C. Argen

First Came Memphis Minnie

...**First Came Memphis Minnie** is a celebration of the music of the **legendary Blues woman "Memphis Minnie" Lawlers** by **Maria Muldaur, Bonnie Raitt, Rory Black, Phoebe Snow, Ruthie Foster, and Koko Taylor** who put their unique mark on Minnie's blues on the 13-track CD on the **[Stony Plain Recording Co. Ltd.](#)** label with assistance from musicians **Del Rey, David Bromberg, Alvin Youngblood Hart, Roy Rogers, Steve James, and Steve Freund.**



...**First Came Memphis Minnie:** *Me and My Chauffeur Blues, Ain't Nothin In Ramblin', I'm Going Back Home, I'm Sailin', When You Love Me, Long As I Can See You Smile, Lookin' The World Over, In My Girlish Days, She Put Me Outdoors, Keep Your Big Mouth Closed, Tricks Ain't Walkin', Crazy Cryin' Blues, Black Rat Swing*

Personnel: Maria Muldaur - vocals, guitar, Roy Rogers - guitars, Roly Solley - bass, Bonnie Raitt - vocals, guitar, Steve Freund - guitar, Alvin Youngblood Hart - vocals, guitar, Del Ray - guitar, Steve James - guitar, mandolin, Rory Black - vocals, guitar, slide guitar, Phoebe Snow - vocals, guitar, David Bromberg - guitars, mandolin, Dave Earl - mandolin, Ruthie Foster - vocals, Tanya Richardson - bass, Samantha Banks - percussion, Koko Taylor - vocals, Steady Rollin' Bob Margolin - slide guitar, Criss Johnson - guitar, Brother John Kattke' - piano, Jimmy Sutton - upright bass, Willie "The Touch" Hayes - drums

...**First Came Memphis Minnie** was produced by **Maria Muldaur** on the **[Stony Plain Recording Co. Ltd.](#)** label. To read other reviews of music by Maria Muldaur, **[Maria Muldaur and Her Garden of Joy](#)** and **[Maria Muldaur - Naughty, Bawdy, and Blue](#)**, please visit the **[Music Scene](#)** section.

"Memphis Minnie" Lawlers born Lizzie "Kid" Douglas, on June 3, 1897 in Algiers, Louisiana, received her first guitar in 1905 at the tender age of 8 years. By then the family was living on a farm outside Memphis, and young Minnie spent her spare time learning to play the guitar, enhanced by unsupervised trips to the legendary Beale Street in Memphis to hear the Blues. At age 13, the intrepid Minnie ran away from home and started playing guitar on street corners for money, and later in Memphis Clubs and even worked with the Ringling Brothers Circus. This was no average woman. In 1929, she started working with, and then married, guitarist Joe McCoy and their distinct "Memphis style" captured the attention of Columbia Records, where they recorded the song "Bumble Bee."

Like a snowball rolling down a hill, Memphis Minnie's fame continued to grow, especially when she hooked up with, and later married, guitarist, Ernest Lawlers "Little Son Joe" (1900 - 1961) in 1941. A major talent, Memphis Minnie could do it all, play the guitar and banjo, sing, and wrote or co-co-wrote songs with Joe McCoy whom she was with until 1935, and later with Ernest Lawlers. When Memphis Minnie died on August 6, 1973, she left a lasting legacy to the world of the Blues.

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Maria Muldaur came to know the music of Memphis Minnie in 1963 in New York City through another blues artist, Victoria Spivey, who at the time was in her late 70s and was running her own label, Spivey Records. Taking a liking to Maria, she introduced her to the music of Memphis Minnie, who has influenced Maria throughout her career.

... ***First Came Memphis Minnie*** is a loving tribute featuring the music of Minnie Lawlers, an American blues legend whose music set the stage for blues artists who continue to appreciate her sound, her sass, and her style.

The 13-track release opens with the 1941 song *Me and My Chauffer Blues* written by Ernest Lawlers with Maria Muldaur delivering the goods singing and playing guitar accompanied by Roy Rogers on guitar and you just hope that the rest of the release is going to be as good.

Ronnie Raitt continues the vibe and does justice to the Minnie Lawlers and Joe McCoy song, *Ain't Nothin' In Ramblin*, providing vocals and guitar, and accompanied by Steve Freund on guitar.

Maria Muldaur and Alvin Youngblood Hart sing duets and play guitars on the Minnie Lawlers song, *I'm Going Back Home*, where Maria sings "I'm going back home where I know I'll get better care" to which Alvin replies ... "I learned to love you more than all the rest ...oh mama, please don't go... I'll tell you this, and it ain't no lie, the day that you leave me is the day you die, oh honey baby, please don't go. "

Rory Black does it all on the Ernest and Minnie Lawlers song, *When You Love Me*, where she sings, and plays guitar, as well as the slide guitar, on this catchy tune.

Phoebe Snow is sensational in the Ernest Lawlers song, *In My Girlish Days*, where her sultry vocals and guitar work, complimented by the distinct guitar and mandolin style of blues guitarist David Bromberg make the song one of my favorites on the release.

Ruthie Foster is enchanting singing on the Minnie Lawlers song, *Keep Your Big Mouth Closed*, where she implores ... "use good judgment and keep your big mouth closed ..." accompanied by Steve Freund on guitars, Tanya Richardson on bass, and Samantha Banks on percussion.

Maria Muldaur first heard Memphis Minnie singing *Tricks' Ain't Walkin'* on an old scratchy 78 record at Victoria Spivey's apartment, which was to influence Maria's style throughout her career. She lovingly does justice to Lucille Bogan song, which incidentally is the only song on the release not written by Minnie, Joe McCoy, or Ernest Lawlers.

The release closes with Koko Taylor belting out the lyrics of the Ernest Lawlers song, *Black Rat Swing*, about a man that just cannot remain faithful, accompanied by Steady Rollin' Bob Margolin on slide guitar, Criss Johnson on guitar, Brother John Kettle on piano, Jimmy Sutton on upright bass, and Willie "The Touch" Hayes on drums.

Other song highlights include *I'm Sailin'*, *Long As I Can See You Smile*, *Lookin' the World Over*, and *Crazy Cryin' Blues* sung by Maria Muldaur.

First Came Memphis Minnie is an incredible release and a loving tribute in the capable hands of Maria Muldaur and her "Sisters in Music," women who carry the blues flag, continuing the legacy of the blues and the music of the iconic Memphis Minnie. I believe Memphis Minnie would not only be pleased with this release, she probably would have joined in, doing what she did best, singing, playing guitar, and writing songs.

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