

BLUES REVUE

THE WORLD'S BLUES MAGAZINE

Soul Survivor: His health restored, Salgado makes a triumphant return with one of his most joyful albums ever

Spotlight

CURTIS SALGADO

Clean Getaway

Shanachie Entertainment



A great backstory makes strong fodder for publicity. Witness the hoopla surrounding Robert Downey Jr.'s return to the top in *Iron Man* after Hollywood had written off the recovering substance abuser. Still, none of that would matter if the movie weren't a juicy slice of entertainment.

Curtis Salgado's backstory makes for a great tale, but before we go there, let's get to the point: *Clean Getaway*, the singer and harmonica player's first release since 2004, is one of the best records you're going to hear this year. If you pine for the glory days of Stax soul, Al Green ballads, and blues-soaked R&B — music that hits hard and makes you want to move — Salgado delivers. The success of pairing him with the Phantom Blues Band, the group-for-hire known for

its work with Taj Mahal and Bonnie Raitt, can't be overstated. Think Otis Redding with Booker T. & the MG's or Green under the direction of Willie Mitchell. The core band of Tony Braunagel (drums and co-producer with Marlon McClain), Johnny Lee Schell (guitars), Mike Finnegan (keyboards), Larry Fulcher (bass), and Joe Sublett (sax) provides Salgado with a groove-heavy canvas for his versatile singing, whether he's channeling funk-era Johnny "Guitar" Watson

(the title track), Sam & Dave-style soul ("Both Sorry Over Nothin'"), or Green himself (the Reverend's classic "Let's Get Married").

Salgado's sultry style on "My Confession" sounds like it emanates from a man who means every word. The track also features a taste of the well-phrased harmonica playing he employs sparingly throughout the disc. Salgado co-wrote two songs that salute the blues: the horn-backed "What's Up With That" and "20 Years of B.B. King," a good-love-gone-bad tale that strings together classic King song titles.

Now, about that backstory: Salgado underwent a liver transplant in 2006 and had a cancerous tumor removed from his lung last year. But all you need to know is that he's returned to music stronger than ever. The evidence is here. You might even call Salgado a superhero.

— Michael Cote