

Salgado outdoes Salgado

By **DON CAMPBELL**
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

In 2001, Northwest soul singer Curtis Salgado released what may have been the best recording of his career. "Soul Activated" well represented the longtime bluesman's vocal range, style, strength as a bandleader, his emerging talents as a songwriter and, for that outing, a deft touch in song selection.

Salgado kicks off the release of his new CD, "Strong Suspicion," with a Tuesday show at the Roseland. His third Shanachie Entertainment release begs the question: What can Salgado possibly do to top "Soul Activated"?

The simple answer: plenty.

The 13-song CD finds Salgado credited as writer or co-writer on seven of the cuts. It features his powerful road band, whose members seem



coming up

Curtis Salgado
"Strong Suspicion"
CD release party

When: 8 p.m. Tuesday

Where: Roseland Theater, 8 N.W. Sixth Ave.

Tickets: \$10 advance, TicketsWest; 503-224-8499

Web site: www.curtis-salgado.com

to lay down mile after mile of seamless groove. Most importantly, it goes another giant step toward defining his philosophy of soul music.

Salgado's a proponent of a loose definition of soul. He finds it in everything from Pavarotti to Otis Redding, from Merle Haggard to Sam Cooke. "Soul," he says, "is about heart and belief."

This record has him wrapping his swagger around Lennon and McCartney's "I'll Be Back," a slippery Bill Withers gem called "Who Is He" and Leon Russell's "Help Me Through the Day."

He also teams with bassist Willy Barber, producer Marlon McClain, pianist D.K. Stewart and former Portland bassist Nate Phillips on cuts that measure up admirably.

The opening track, "Patience," penned by Barber, could've easily been the title cut of the project, and it's an apt description of Salgado's career. It's a smoldering soul groove that reprises the

line, "Just give me patience/And I'll be home soon/Give me patience/And I'll bring you home the moon."

Salgado's treatment of The Beatles' "I'll Be Back" plays right out of the Stax/Volt studio, with breezy guitar from Jacob Wolf and a soulful, rhythmic lope.

Invoking the ghost of Pops Staples and the Staples Singers, Salgado tackles Bill Withers' "Who Is He (And What Is He To You)?" It smolders with intensity, especially on its muscular unison chorus. He goes gut-wrenching gospel on "Born All Over Again," in the tradition of O.V. Wright and Hank Ballard. He covers local bluesman Lloyd Jones' "I Can't Stop Lovin'," a country rocker with Bekka Bramlett adding vocals, and partners with longtime cohort-in-crime Stewart on "Love Her Because."

Salgado and Barber churn on the title cut, a rocker with a serious attitude a la the Rolling Stones and the Black Crowes. Like long-time friend and former bandmate Robert Cray, he can touch down on the sensitive side, evidenced by "Inside My Heart," a song he co-wrote with McClain, which features a Jacob Wolf guitar intro and accompaniment than can only be called thrilling.

Throughout, Salgado's vocals soar and burn. The rhythm section of drummer Don Worth and bassist Barber is as faithful and true as a long-haul trucker's rig, providing machine-like precision and consistency. Wolf is beginning to emerge as a powerful solo voice instead of a well-schooled imitator. The tasty slide guitar of Sonny Landreth is sprinkled throughout the album.

Salgado says he had more fun making this record than the last one. It shows. In a long and hard career, he's matured into a certifiable and confident force on the soul and blues scene.