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ARTIST: Aaron Neville

TITLES: The Best Of Aaron Neville 20th Century Masters The Millennium Collection

CD #: 069 493 310-2

UPC #: 6 069 493 310-2 3

CD Logo: A&M Records

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Beth

Aaron Neville
The Best Of Aaron Neville 20th Century Masters The Millennium Collection
(CD Folder)

The voice is an essential human miracle, the articulation of our anger, pride, joy, fear, hope, despair, devotion—the very expression of our soul. The musical voice is a double miracle, turning ordinary speech into art. That miraculous transformation is especially apparent in the artistry of Aaron Neville, who elevates every song he sings, even the most secular, to a level of spiritual grace.

Like the ethereal beauty of his sound, Aaron's singular style goes deep. He is unusual in all respects—the delicate tenor of his voice, the subtlety of his phrasing, the astounding variety of material he makes his own. Born January 24, 1941, in New Orleans, he is a product of not only the extraordinarily diverse currents that define that city's musical culture, but a richly musical family as well. His older brother Art, a brilliant pianist and vocalist, was Aaron's first influence; another older brother, Charles, a master saxophonist, taught him the refinement of jazz phrasing; and a younger brother, Cyril, became his soul-singing partner and closest ally. Ultimately the four men would form the Neville Brothers, but not until 1977. Before that, in 1966, Aaron broke on the

national scene with the song that starts this collection, “Tell It Like It Is,” an enduring touchstone of American pop/soul.

Aaron’s plaintive interpretation harks back to the golden age of fifties doo wop, the style that, perhaps more than any other, molded his musical personality. When he discusses his early influences, he speaks as beguilingly as he sings. “The voices that intrigued me,” he says, “were not only the Moonglows, Flamingos and Orioles, but those cowboys yodeling in the movies. I loved that sound. I also loved the gospel groups, especially Sam Cooke with the Soul Stirrers, the Blind Boys, the Pilgrim Travelers and the Brooklyn All-Stars. I studied the way their harmonies were woven, and I learned to sing each part, from bottom bass to top tenor. My religion also shaped my music. I’m Catholic. As a boy, I went to Catholic schools and was taught by the nuns. I loved the feeling of church. I learned to sing the ‘Ave Marie.’ I learned a prayer to the Madonna called ‘Lovely Lady Dressed in Blue.’ The music that meant the most to me seemed to come from heaven.”

Beginning with “Tell It Like It Is,” heavenly harmonies became an Aaron Neville trademark. Unfortunately, the small label for which he recorded went broke. In the years ahead, Aaron fought a squadron of private and professional demons. His career stalled. It wasn’t until the eighties that the Neville Brothers were signed to Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss’s A&M label. And it wasn’t until the nineties that Aaron initiated a series of superb albums for the same label, the most consistent and well-produced work of his career. The bulk of the material in this collection is culled from that fertile period.

“I finally found a home at A&M with producers like Steve Lindsey, George Massenburg and Linda Ronstadt,” Aaron reminisces. “Linda and George produced my first album, *Warm My Heart*.” The title song, written by the formidable Atlantic team of Jerry Wexler, Ahmet Ertegun and Tom Dowd, first came into Aaron’s consciousness back in the fifties via Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters. “Linda understands that era as well I do,” says Aaron, whose duets with Ronstadt—represented here by “Please Remember Me” from *To Make Me Who I Am*—accounted for some of his biggest hits. “I also cut The Main Ingredients’ ‘Everybody Plays The Fool’ on that first album. It was a crowd pleaser when Cyril and I sang in our seventies cover band, the Soul Machine. Bill Withers’ ‘Use Me’ was another Soul Machine favorite. The Soul Machine never recorded but, believe me, we were bad.”

A colleague of mine once criticized Aaron for abandoning his roots. My reply was to play “Angola Bound,” a lament as rootsy as anything by John Lee Hooker or Lightnin’ Hopkins. My colleague was instantly contrite. Aaron’s roots are apparent in everything song he sings. As an artist, he’s intuitively autobiographical. If he’s not reinventing a tune to reflect his own state of mind—listen to “A Change Is Gonna Come,” taken from the Neville Brothers’ incandescent *Yellow Moon*—he’s writing original compositions: “Sweet Amelia,” named after his beloved mother, or “To Make Me Who I Am,” a heartrending memoir in the form of a five-and-a-half-minute meditation. “Who I am,” says Aaron, “is a man in love with music, a man convinced music can heal. I get chills when a mother writes me to say that my voice was the only thing that could calm her autistic child. That’s when I know the power of music goes beyond the world we can see and touch. Music is divine. It’s a spirit I first felt as a little boy. It’s the spirit that keeps me sane. I believe it’s the spirit of love.”

David Ritz
March, 2002

David Ritz cowrote THE BROTHERS NEVILLE (Da Capo Press) with Aaron, Art, Charles and Cyril Neville. His current book is FAITH IN TIME, a biography of Jimmy Scott.

Aaron Neville

The Best Of Aaron Neville 20th Century Masters The Millennium Collection

(CD Folder)

- 1) Tell It Like It Is
(George Davis-Lee Diamond)
Originally Par-Lo single 101 (1966)
Arranged & Conducted by George Davis
Courtesy Par-Lo Enterprises, licensed through Janus Records, Inc. by
Celebrity Licensing, Inc.
- 2) Warm Your Heart
(Tom Dowd-Jerry Wexler-Ahmet Ertegun)
Originally on A&M album "Warm Your Heart" (1991)
Produced by Linda Ronstadt & George Massenburg
- 3) Sweet Amelia
(Aaron Neville-Gordon Chambers-Robbie Nevil-Bradley Spalter)
Originally on A&M album "To Make Me Who I Am" (1997)
Produced by Robbie Nevil and Bradley for O.S. Productions
Vocal Production by Gordon Chambers
- 4) Don't Take Away My Heaven
(Diane Warren)
Originally on A&M album "The Grand Tour" (1993)
Produced by Steve Lindsey
- 5) I Can't Imagine
(Steve Lindsey-Aaron Neville-Brock Walsh)
Originally on the A&M soundtrack album "The Truth About Cats And Dogs" (1996)
Produced by Steve Lindsey & Brock Walsh
- 6) Everybody Plays The Fool
(Rudy Clark-Jim R. Bailey-Ken Williams)
Originally A&M single 1563 (1991)
Produced by Linda Ronstadt, George Massenburg, & Russell Kunkel
- 7) A Change Is Gonna Come
(Sam Cooke)
Performed by The Neville Brothers
Originally on A&M album "Yellow Moon" (1989)
Produced by Daniel Lanois
- 8) Angola Bound
(Aaron Neville-Charles Neville)

Originally on A&M album “Warm Your Heart” (1991)
Produced by Linda Ronstadt & George Massenburg

- 9) Please Remember Me
(Rodney Crowell-Will Jennings)
Duet by Linda Ronstadt
Originally on A&M album “To Make Me Who I Am” (1997)
Produced by Linda Ronstadt & George Massenburg
- 10) Use Me
(Bill Withers)
Originally on A&M album “The Tattooed Heart” (1995)
Produced by Steve Lindsey
- 11) Some Days Are Made For Rain
(Jon Lind-Phil Gladston)
Originally on A&M album “The Tattooed Heart” (1995)
Produced by Steve Lindsey
- 12) To Make Me Who I Am
(Aaron Neville-Gordon Chambers-Robbie Nevil-Bradley Spalter)
Originally on A&M album “To Make Me Who I Am” (1997)
Produced by Robbie Nevil & Bradley for O.S. Productions

Compiled by Aaron Neville & Andy McKaie

Reissue Produced by Andy McKaie

Digitally remastered by Erick Labson, Universal Mastering Studios—West, No. Hollywood, CA
Art Direction: Vartan

Design:

Photo Research:

Photos:

Production Coordination: Beth Stempel

Also Available by Aaron Neville:

The Very Best Of Aaron Neville (069 490 482-2)

My Greatest Gift - The Classic Aaron Neville (116 612 102-2)

Soulful Christmas (314 540 127-2)

The Gran Tour (314 540 086-2)

The Tattooed Heart (314 540 349-2)

To Make Me Who I Am (314 540 784-2)

Warm Your Heart (750 215 354-2)

Also Available by The Neville Brothers:

Brother's Keeper (750 215 312-2)
Family Groove (750 215 384-2)
Fiyo On The Bayou (750 214 866-2)
Live On Planet Earth (314 540 225-2)
Uptown Rulin' / Best Of The Neville Brothers (069 490 403-2)
Yellow Moon (750 214 240-2)

The Best Of...20th Century Masters/The Millennium Collections Also Available:

Billy Preston (069 493 293-2)
The Five Blind Boys Of Mississippi (088 112 867-2)
The Dixie Hummingbirds (088 112 864-2)
The Mighty Clouds Of Joy (088 112 865-2)
Curtis Mayfield & The Impressions (088 112 191-2)
Eddie Kendricks (012 159 500-2)
The Temptations Volume 1 (012 153 362-2)
The Temptations Volume 2 (012 153 733-2)
Joe Cocker (314 541 606-2)
Brook Benton (314 541 363-2)
Quincy Jones (069 490 448-2)
Ramsey Lewis (088 112 769-2)
The Dells (088 112 358-2)
Jennifer Holliday (069 497 385-2)

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(CD Inlay)

- 1) Tell It Like It Is
- 2) Warm Your Heart
- 3) Sweet Amelia
- 4) Don't Take Away My Heaven
- 5) I Can't Imagine
- 6) Everybody Plays The Fool
- 7) A Change Is Gonna Come
- 8) Angola Bound
- 9) Please Remember Me
- 10) Use Me
- 11) Some Days Are Made For Rain
- 12) To Make Me Who I Am

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His Dozen Greatest
Including “Tell It Like It Is”
& “Everybody Plays The Fool”
069 493 310-2