

Let It Burn, by Ruthie Foster

reviewed by [Steve Thorngate](#) in the [May 30, 2012](#) issue

In Review



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by Ruthie Foster

Blue Corn

Ruthie Foster has a powerhouse of a blues/gospel voice, which she never allows to overpower a song. If you're not sold already, Foster made her newest album in New Orleans with the Blind Boys of Alabama and a cast of hotshot players. It wouldn't

have killed them to restrain the Hammond organ player once in a while, but that's being picky: the project brings a truckload of soul and grit.

Foster contributes just two original songs. Both sound good, especially "Lord Remember Me," with its a capella opening:

But the main event is covers, sometimes dramatically reimagined. "You Don't Miss Your Water" is particularly good, a swing blues groove upping the soul ballad's energy much as the Byrds' countrified version did—though Foster's approach also sits well under a guest vocal by the original performer, William Bell.

"Ring of Fire" fails as a ballad, its lyrics stripped of all danger. And while "If I Had a Hammer" certainly needed a less relentlessly cheery makeover, there was no need to get rid of the song's word-painting backbeat. Otherwise, however, Foster offers great and infectious stuff.