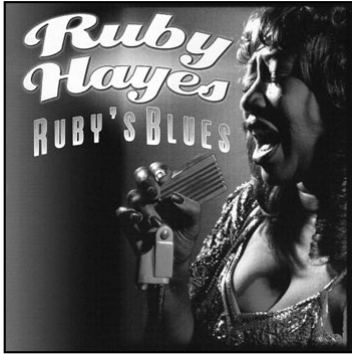


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BIMONTHLY NEWS OF THE COLORADO BLUES SCENE • VOL. 10, No. 3 • DECEMBER 2004–JANUARY 2005 • 303-415-2737 • HOLLER@COBLUES.COM



Ruby Hayes, *Ruby's Blues*, 2003, Princess House Records PHR 001

I think Ruby Hayes could sing jazz, pop or show tunes—but as these 11 songs attest, she's at home in the blues. Her clear vocal style is very listenable and she has a kick-ass band to keep things moving along. There are three Bessie Smith tunes, which is just fine by this fan of the Empress—"St. Louis Blues" (spiced up by David Carr's guitar intro and sung in a sultry manner), "Do Your Duty" and "You've Been a Good Old Wagon"—and Ruby delivers the goods.

My favorite track is "Trouble in Mind," with Ron Hearn's sax and Eric Byrd's piano trading fills and echoes. Once again, Ruby is right on the money with the Etta James classic, "At Last"—the whole band has a breezy, jazzy take on this one and it works perfectly.

Ruby's Blues can be ordered at www.dcjazz.com or www.amazon.com.

Jim Primock