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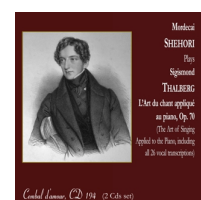


William Bell – The Soul Of A Bell – Speakers Corner Records

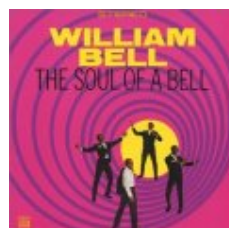
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by Audiophile Audition | May 5, 2021 | Pop/Rock/World CD Reviews, SACD & Other Hi-Res Reviews | 0 comments

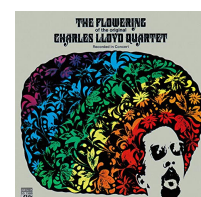
**Cembal
d'amour**



William Bell – The Soul Of A Bell – Stax Records S 719 (1967)/Speakers Corner Records (2020) 180-gram stereo vinyl, 32:12 ** 1/2:**



**Pure
Pleasure /
Speakers
Corner**



(William Bell – vocals; Booker T. Jones – organ; Steve Cropper – guitar; Donald “Duck” Dunn – bass; Isaac Hayes – keyboards; Al Jackson Jr. –

Cedille

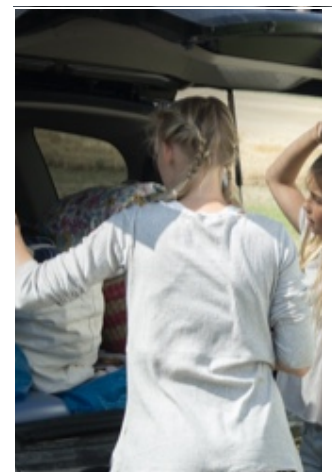
drums; Wayne Jackson – trumpet; Andrew Love – tenor saxophone)

The History of American soul music is deeply rooted in blues. Labels like Chess and Atlantic were the leading producers of this rapidly evolving musical style. In the 1960's, the primary soul labels were Motown and Stax. Based in Memphis, Stax had built a reputation as an influential blues outfit, that catered to Southern-influenced music. Their famous studio on McLemore Avenue had a unique raw sound that was represented in the recordings. This set them apart from their competitors at Motown. Their distribution agreement with Atlantic (ATCO) contributed to the early commercial success. What put Stax on the map was Otis Redding. His intense vocals and the muscular arrangements made him a burgeoning superstar. Redding's untimely death in 1967, dealt a blow to the label. That year other vocal stars began to emerge. One of them was Memphis native William Bell. His debut, *The Soul Of A Bell* showcased Bell's singing and songwriting skills.

Speakers Corner Records has released a 180-gram re-mastered vinyl of *The Soul Of A Bell*. Backed by Booker T. & The M.G.'s, eleven soulful tunes (some written by Bell) come to life. Side 1 opens with a Bell/Booker T. original "Everyone Loves A Winner". In what is a scaled back arrangement, a gentle, soulful ambiance envelops the song. The time-tested narrative of loss is set against relaxed grooves. Bell captures the melancholy as he croons..."when you lose, you lose alone". "You Don't Miss Your Water" is trademark Stax with a gospel undercurrent provided by Booker T. Jones on piano and organ. Bell's a gifted lyricist and it shows here. Everyone is familiar with "Do Right Woman-Do Right Man". The song helped to launch the career of Aretha Franklin. Many others have covered this tune in the hopes of matching "The Queen Of Soul". William Bell dials it back to reflect his mellow tone and restrained delivery. There are touches like jazzy horn/sax and 2nd chorus backup vocals that add some texture. Bell can turn up the intensity, but always with understatement. This low-key soulful testimony is present on Otis Redding's powerhouse, "I've Been Loving You Too Long (To Stop Now)". Bell essentially injects mellowness in place of growling ferocity. There has always been a connection between country music and r & B. Toussaint McCall's "Nothing Takes The Place Of You" managed to bridge these genres. Bell exudes the bluesy agony with heartfelt earnest. The category-defying continues on "Then You Can Tell Me



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Goodbye". Recorded as a country and doo-wop hit, Bell distills the plaintive resignation with his dulcet vocal rumination.

Side 2 considerably shifts gears to up tempo jams. "Eloise (Hang In There)" infuses 1960's ebullience in quintessential Memphis aesthetics. Steve Cropper's guitar licks permeate the funky, rhythmic sway of "Any Other Way". Any laid-back tendencies are no longer part of the session. The vaunted Stax house band percolates on the Isaac Hayes' joyful romp, "It's Happening All Over". The presence of Wayne Jackson (trumpet) and Andrew Love" is more prominent in the arrangement. The momentum keeps escalating on the accessible and hip-shaking "Never Like This Before". Bell simply cuts loose here, He channels the presence of Otis Redding and Wilson Pickett with his own vocal prowess. "You're Such A Sweet Thing" is a rollicking finale to this highlight-filled thirty-two minute album.

Speakers Corner Records has done a stellar job in re-mastering The Soul Of A Bell to 180-gram vinyl. The unfiltered essence of Stax is present and the mix is balanced. This pressing is meticulous with little surface noise.

TrackList:

Side 1: Everybody Loves A Winner; You Don't Miss Your Water; Do Right Woman-Do Right Man; I've Been Loving You Too Long (To Stop Now); Nothing Takes The Place Of You

Side 2: Eloise (Hang On In There); Any Other Way; It's Happening All Over; Never Like This Before; You're Such A Sweet Thing

—Robbie Gerson

For more information about this and other Speakers Corner releases, see distributor [Acoustic Sounds](#).



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