



PRESERVING HEALTH & HUMANITY NOW:

A FESTSCRIFT IN HONOR OF LAWRENCE O. GOSTIN

Aloe Blacc

Iconic R&B and soul vocalist Aloe Blacc has focused his career on putting positivity and beauty into the world. “I always want my songs to inspire people, motivate people, and help them dream bigger,” he says with that trademark warm smile. And this year will prove to be the gold standard in Blacc’s effort. In addition to the upcoming 10th anniversary edition of his landmark album *Lift Your Spirit*, 2024 will also see Blacc cover a variety of classic alt rock hits on two EP-length volumes called *Rock My Soul*.

The California native picked up trumpet in grade school, but dreamed of being an emcee—putting together hip-hop projects, including three records with producer Exile as Emanon. Later, a recording of Blacc singing Sam Cooke’s “Change Is Gonna Come” lit up the indie label circuit. “My heroes were Bill Withers, Harry Belafonte, Stevie Wonder, people with messages that were self-affirming,” he says. Blacc’s beloved early solo hits like “I Need a Dollar” and “The Man” (from 2010’s *Good Things* and 2014’s *Lift Your Spirit*, respectively) followed powerfully in that tradition.

The first taste of *Rock My Soul*, a regal take on Soundgarden’s “Black Hole Sun”, finds Blacc on an interstellar funk rock journey. “That was a song that affected me the very first time I heard it—and it always will,” Blacc says. That personal connection permeates a bossa nova-indebted take on “Lithium”, a twitchy, Rhodes-driven version of No Doubt’s “Don’t Speak”, and a satin ballad take on RHCP’s “Under the Bridge”.

“That’s what we did in hip-hop—we’d take from everywhere, interpret, and I love to see music growing that way,” Blacc says. “Grunge and alt rock had a lot of the depression, anxiety, angst of their era. Nina Simone, Stevie Wonder, the Isley Brothers, they took rock songs and transformed them into soul or funk songs, and found how to channel their emotions.”

Ever tapped into the larger industry culture and American spirit, Blacc has felt the same transformations surrounding *Lift Your Spirit*. “It felt right to celebrate the 10-year mark, to tell people again that they deserve joy,” he says. The record’s opening track and lead single



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embodies that reminder, and after catapulting Blacc to the top of the charts worldwide in its first-released incarnation alongside Swedish DJ Avicii, the acoustic version of “Wake Me Up” further elevates the calls for harmony. The Deluxe reissue of Lift Your Spirit will also feature three additional tracks initially released on retailer-specific editions or international markets.

And as if all that weren’t enough, Blacc has his eyes set on another album release in February of 2025, with its first track dropping later this year. This time, though, he’ll match his philanthropic streak to the music, with each track inspired by a different nonprofit organization. And considering the tension and conflict that surrounds so much of every day, there couldn’t be a better time for the soothing balm of Aloe Blacc.