REVIEW · BLUES

South Gotta Change | Adia Victoria

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The word that sticks in your head might not be "South". It might be "change": a short word, but one capable of shifting the whole weight of the title. **South. Change.** Two sharp knocks, like knuckles on a door that will not open by itself.

Adia Victoria grew up in South Carolina, in a religious environment, and later encountered other cultural possibilities. Poetry and storytelling came before music; the guitar entered her life relatively late. In the blues she found a space to speak about her experience as a Black Southern woman without sweetening it.

Released in August 2020, *South Gotta Change* is tied to the death of John Lewis and to the need to carry on his work. T Bone Burnett is credited as executive producer. Victoria has called the song a prayer, an affirmation and a battle cry: three voices, **strong, distinct, intertwined, urgent and insistent**, overlapping without silencing each other, like three bells ringing in the same square.

The title holds a demand, but also a sense of belonging. Victoria does not speak about the South as a tourist, nor does she merely imagine escape. She claims it while contesting its history and its present. She does not say the South must disappear, or that she must leave. She says: the South has to change.

Criticism thus becomes a form of attachment. Not an absolution, but a demand addressed to a place you know too well to look at from a distance. Anger and hope run like two currents in the same song: they collide, break, then keep flowing. Her voice is steady, proud and fervent, like a root holding on in dry ground.

> ***Can you truly love a place precisely because you refuse to absolve it?***

LISTEN

South Gotta Change — Adia Victoria — is in our playlist Acoustic Blues, Roots & Dust.

Adia Victoria. Updated every Friday. Selected by ear.