REVIEW · BLUES

Fish Ain't Bitin' | Corey Harris

The fish are there, but they won't bite. A fishing trip becomes a mirror.

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Some kids go fishing. The fish are there, but they won't bite. The line stays taut, the water flows: **splish, splash**, and hope waits on the bank. Little by little, that fishing trip becomes a mirror reflecting wider hardships.

Corey Harris studied anthropology, lived in Cameroon and worked as a teacher in Louisiana. The relationship between American blues and African music runs through his work, including the journey told in *Feel Like Going Home*.

For *Fish Ain't Bitin'*, Harris drew on memories of family fishing trips in East Texas. He set them beside the difficulties he met living in Louisiana: environment, education, work and access to services. The resources are there, but not everyone can reach them. The fish won't bite; life does not put the same bait within everyone's reach, like a rich harvest behind a locked gate.

The sound widens the scene too. The spoken opening gives way to the brass, and the track moves from country blues towards New Orleans. Tuba and horns are not

ornaments: they bring into the song an air that is **warm, communal, lively, urban and festive**, as if a family memory opened onto a street full of voices. The horns rise, ring out, push the scene beyond the riverbank.

Harris starts from a private image and lets it grow into social commentary. No explicit lesson is needed: a riverbank, a line and a fish that won't bite are enough. The blues does not have to look to a distant past; it can be a window on the present, on the gap between those who see the resources and those who can actually reach them. His gaze is **clear, engaged, concrete, attentive and human**, like someone who stays on the bank and keeps watching.

> ***What if one of the blues' tasks were still to tell the story of those who see the resources around them without being able to reach them?***

LISTEN

Fish Ain't Bitin' — Corey Harris — is in our playlist Acoustic Blues, Roots & Dust.

Corey Harris. Updated every Friday. Selected by ear.