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Various Artists

Come On Up To The House:

Women Sing Waits DUALTONE



The peculiarities of Tom Waits' voice offer him a clearly defined persona. His dementedly deep, gravely tone evokes

clear images: a wise but grizzled farmer, a cutthroat carnie with a fat cigar, a bar-dweller with a belly full of whiskey and a fist-fight in his future. Waits is almost impossible to imitate—you either venture into accidental comedy or come off like a tribute artist. So producer **Warren Zanes** crafted the perfect framework for *Come On Up To The House*, his studio salute to one of rock's most authentic and idiosyncratic oddballs: Working with a crew of high-profile frontwomen, he stripped the songs of their ruggedness to accentuate lightness and femininity, two qualities rarely associated with Waits' work.

The album highlights the more traditional side of the Waits catalog, including a handful of melancholy folk ballads from 1999's *Mule Variations*—and most of the arrangements stay faithful to the originals, like **Aimee Mann** adding a soft, subtle twang to “Hold On” or **Iris Dement** offering a warbled vibrato to “House Where Nobody Lives.” Some of these moments feel redundant, seemingly prioritizing the “Women Sing Waits” angle over “People Sing Waits With a Purpose.” The most intriguing pieces experiment with form and texture, accentuating the malleability of the

originals—from Joseph singer **Natalie Schepman** twisting “Come On Up To The House” into a “Down to the River to Pray”-styled folk spiritual or **Kat Edmonson**'s whimsical take on “You Can Never Hold Back Spring,” which conjures a faded photograph of a Dust Bowl circus. *Ryan Reed*