

WALTER JACKSON: Speak Her Name , the Okeh Recordings Volume 3 (Label: Kent)

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There are few male voices in soul as luxuriously opulent and caressingly smooth as Walter Jackson's resonant baritone. The Florida-born singer spent most of his life on crutches - he suffered from polio - and tragically, died while only in his mid-forties back in 1983. Fortunately for soul fans, he left a rich musical legacy behind that includes recordings done for the Brunswick, Chi-Town, Cotillion and Columbia labels. Arguably, though, his most significant sides were cut for Okeh in the mid to late '60s. Ace's Kent imprint - and in particular compiler/annotator, Tony Rounce - has done a tremendous job in reissuing Jackson's neglected Okeh output on CD. This, the third and final instalment chronicling the final phase of the soul singer's Okeh tenure, is arguably the best. The first ten tracks belong to Jackson's 1967 LP, 'Speak Her Name,' which included the R&B smashes 'It's An Uphill Climb To The Bottom,' 'After You There Can Be Nothing' and 'A Corner In The Sun.' The album - an amalgam of smooth uptown soul and Tin Pan Alley covers - also includes the lovely Bacharach-David tune, 'They Don't Give Medals To Yesterday's Heroes,' which Jackson imbues with a mellow poignancy. There are ten bonus tracks: a collection of non-album 45s and their flips plus a brace of unreleased tunes. Jackson's two Epic singles from 1969 are also present, making this an excellent, value-for-money collection that dedicated soul fans shouldn't ignore.

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