

## BLUE MAGIC: Blue Magic (Label: Rhino)

Written by Bill Buckley

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Soul historians often argue why Philly quintet Blue Magic weren't bigger stars. They debuted in 1974 with a wonderful eponymous 9 tracker that used the cream of the then Philadelphia scene. The band scored a run of deserved single hits but by the end the seventies they seemed a spent force, and despite comebacks, they're rarely mentioned in the same breath as Philly's big, big hitters from the same period. Hopefully with this new Rhino re-issue of that remarkable debut LP, Blue Magic might soon enjoy some belated glory. Essentially what you get here is a master class in sweet soul harmony singing which rivals anything laid down by the O'Jays, The Spinners, the Blues Notes, the Delfonics or the Stylistics at that time. The big hit 'Sideshow' kicks things off. You'll know it's a beautifully poignant ballad that's matched by stuff like 'What's Come Over Me', 'Stop To Start', 'Spell' and 'Answer To My Prayer'. If you like things a little more up-tempo, there's the crisp 'Welcome To The Club' and the crisper 'Look Me Up' while if you like to make direct comparisons try the Magic version of 'Just Don't Want To Be Lonely' in all its seven minute majesty. This re-mastered album includes three bonus cuts - two single B-sides ('Guess Who' and 'Where Have You Been') and the Tom Moulton mix of 'Look Me Up'. Main Magic man, Ted Mills has just made a comeback as part of the Three Philly Tenors, and though that trio's album is hugely enjoyable, there's nothing there that matches the wonderful seventies soul herein. Time now for everyone to catch up on the magic of the blue... this album incidentally is part of Rhino's big re-issue programme that also sees classic albums from people like Leroy Hutson, Ace Spectrum, Prince Phillip Mitchell, Ronn Matlock and Gwen McCrae deservedly back on the racks.

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