

= Matriarch of the Blues =

Matriarch of the Blues is an album by Etta James , released in December 2000 through the record label Private Music . The album 's title reflects James ' nickname as " matriarch of the blues " . Marking James ' return to blues following attempts at country music and jazz and pop standards , the album consisted primarily of rhythm and blues covers . James ' sons , Donto and Sametto , are credited as engineers , mixers and producers , among other contributions ; the album features Mike Finnigan on the Hammond organ , guitarist Leo Nocentelli , and performances on multiple instruments by Jimmy Zavala .

Matriarch of the Blues received mixed critical reception . Following its release , the album reached a peak position of number two on Billboard 's Top Blues Albums chart . Billboard 's final issue for 2001 included Matriarch as number ten on its list of Top Blues Albums for the year . The album was nominated for Best Contemporary Blues Album at the 44th Grammy Awards .

= Background and composition =

Entertainment Weekly considered Matriarch of the Blues to be James ' reclamation as the " mother of the blues " following recent attempts at country music and jazz and pop standards . Rolling Stone grouped Matriarch in a " trifecta " with James ' previous two studio albums , Life , Love & the Blues (1998) and Heart of a Woman (1999) . Prior to the album 's release , James performed at the eighteenth annual San Francisco Jazz Festival at the Masonic Auditorium . The concert lasted over three hours and featured an eight -piece band , members of which included her sons Donto and Sametto .

Matriarch is composed of rock , soul and blues standards between five and seven minutes in length . People magazine contributors described James ' vocals as " deeply funky " . Mike Finnigan performed the Hammond B3 organ , Leo Nocentelli featured on guitar , and Jimmy Zavala contributed performances on multiple instruments . James ' two sons ? Donto and Sametto ? produced and engineered , and played drums and bass , respectively .

The album begins with the sound of a motorcycle engine . Bob Dylan 's " Gotta Serve Somebody " is delivered , according to Parke Puterbaugh of Rolling Stone , with " the air of Old Testament @-@ style authority it demands " . James does not modify the lyrics , singing " You can call me Bobby , you can call me Jimmy " . " Don 't Let My Baby Ride " , originally by Deadric Malone and O. V. Wright , adds a bit of sensuality to the album with the line " If his jeans are too tight ... you might see what you like . " Other covers include Al Green 's " Rhymes " , " Try a Little Tenderness " (Jimmy Campbell and Reg Connelly , Harry M. Woods) , and Otis Redding 's " Hawg for Ya " . The tempo of The Rolling Stones ' " Miss You " is slowed down to a " sensual simmer " . James modified the gender mentioned in the lyrics , singing " Puerto Rican boys just dying to meet you " . Following " Hawg " are Malone 's " You 're Gonna Make Me Cry " , which features vocals by Finnigan , Sandy Jones ' " Walking the Back Streets " , and Benny Latimore 's " Let 's Straighten It Out " . Closing the album are John Fogerty 's " Born on the Bayou " , " Come Back Baby " (Ray Charles , Lightnin ' Hopkins) , and Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller 's " Hound Dog " .

= Reception =

Matriarch of the Blues received mixed critical reception . Allmusic 's Matthew Robinson wrote that James " coast [ed] " through the album and the backing band lacked " youthful vitality " . Robinson thought the album 's opening track " Gotta Serve Somebody " came across more as a " sleepy suggestion " . However , he felt the " draggier pace and intermittent woofs " in " Miss You " added sex appeal and complimented the " funkification " of " Born on the Bayou " and " Hound Dog " . Associated Press contributor Gene Bright wrote a positive review of the album but was disappointed with James ' cover of " Miss You " , writing " the song just can 't be slowed and manipulated with any success " . People magazine contributors felt that the motorcycle introduction was unnecessary and considered the album to be more " full @-@ throated gospel @-@ rock " than blues . However ,

they wrote that James sounded " as sexy and full of sass as she did nearly half a century ago " . With James ' sons contributing to the album , Bill Milkowski of JazzTimes called the album a " real family affair " and " worthy follow @-@ up " to Heart of a Woman . In his review for Out , Barry Walters complimented Donto and Sametto 's rhythm performances . Walters admitted that James all of the notes available to her in the 1960s but wrote that her " interpretive abilities are sharper than ever " .

The Morning Call 's Larry Printz published a negative review , concluding that James ' performance was mediocre and that the " nuances in [her] once @-@ formidable voice are long gone " . Printz also criticized the slow tempo throughout the album and accused James of " coasting " on her legendary status . James Sullivan of Entertainment Weekly wrote that James ' " voice isn 't quite the nasty snarl it once was , but the attitude remains " . Sullivan thought " Hound Dog " was the album 's best composition . Rolling Stone 's Marie Elsie St. Léger wrote that James provided a " healthy dose of rootsy feminism and mettle " with her " passionately seasoned and gravel @-@ edged voice " . St. Léger also complimented James and her performance for having " inimitable depth " and for " making no apologies and needing no permission to sing it like she feels it . " Parke Puterbaugh of Rolling Stone named " Don 't Let My Baby Ride " , " Hawg for Ya " and " Come Back Baby " as the album 's greatest tracks . In his review , Puterbaugh concluded that the album is a " solid return to roots " , allowing James the right to reclaim her titular throne .

= = Chart performance and recognitions = =

The album reached a peak position of number two on Billboard 's Top Blues Albums chart . The album entered the chart at number seven the week of December 20 , 2000 . Matriarch climbed to number four by the week of January 27 , 2001 . By its fifteenth week on the chart the album had fallen to number seven and by its twenty @-@ fifth week on the chart (week of June 16 , 2001) the album remained at number thirteen . Billboard 's final issue for 2001 included Matriarch of the Blues as number ten on its list of Top Blues Albums for the year . James and the album were nominated for Best Contemporary Blues Album at the 44th Grammy Awards , but lost to Delbert McClinton for the album Nothing Personal .

= = Track listing = =

" Gotta Serve Somebody " (Bob Dylan) ? 6 : 48
 " Don 't Let My Baby Ride " (Deadric Malone , O. V. Wright) ? 5 : 16
 " Rhymes " (Al Green , Teenie Hodges) ? 4 : 35
 " Try a Little Tenderness " (Jimmy Campbell , Reg Connelly , Harry M. Woods) ? 4 : 47
 " Miss You " (Mick Jagger , Keith Richards) ? 5 : 59
 " Hawg for Ya " (Otis Redding) ? 3 : 45
 " You 're Gonna Make Me Cry " (Deadric Malone) ? 6 : 17
 " Walking the Back Streets " (Sandy Jones , Jr .) ? 7 : 07
 " Let 's Straighten It Out " (Curtis , Latimore , Scotomayer) ? 5 : 24
 " Born on the Bayou " (John Fogerty) ? 4 : 41
 " Come Back Baby " (Ray Charles , Lightnin ' Hopkins) ? 5 : 57
 " Hound Dog " (Jerry Leiber , Mike Stoller) ? 3 : 43

Track listing adapted from Allmusic .

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from Allmusic .

= Æthelred , Lord of the Mercians =

Æthelred , Lord of the Mercians (or Ealdorman Æthelred of Mercia ; died 911) became ruler of English Mercia shortly after the death of its last king , Ceolwulf II in 879 . His rule was confined to the western half , as eastern Mercia was then part of the Viking @-@ ruled Danelaw . Æthelred 's ancestry is unknown . He was probably the leader of an unsuccessful Mercian invasion of Wales in 881 , and soon afterwards he acknowledged the lordship of King Alfred the Great of Wessex . The alliance was cemented by the marriage of Æthelred to Alfred 's daughter Æthelflæd .

In 886 Alfred took possession of London , which had suffered greatly from several Viking occupations ; as it had traditionally been a Mercian town , he handed control to Æthelred . In 892 the Vikings renewed their attacks , and the following year Æthelred led an army of Mercians , West Saxons and Welsh to victory over a Viking army at the Battle of Buttington . He spent the next three years fighting them alongside Alfred 's son , the future King Edward the Elder . At some time in the decade 899 to 909 , Æthelred 's health may have declined , and Æthelflæd may have become the effective ruler of Mercia .

After Æthelred 's death , Æthelflæd ruled as Lady of the Mercians until her own death in 918 . The couple 's only child , a daughter called Ælfwynn , then ruled briefly until deposed by her uncle , King Edward .

= = Background = =

Mercia was the dominant kingdom in southern England in the eighth century , and maintained its position until it suffered a decisive defeat by King Egbert of Wessex at the Battle of Ellandun in 825 . Egbert briefly conquered Mercia , but it recovered its independence in 830 , and thereafter the two kingdoms became allies , which was to be an important factor in English resistance to the Vikings . The Mercians traditionally held overlordship over Wales , and in 853 King Burgred of Mercia obtained the assistance of King Æthelwulf of Wessex in an invasion of Wales in order to reassert their hegemony . The same year , Burgred married Æthelwulf 's daughter .

In 865 the Viking Great Heathen Army landed in East Anglia , and used it as a starting point for an invasion . The East Anglians were forced to buy peace , and the following year the Vikings invaded Northumbria , where they established an obscure Northumbrian man called Egbert as puppet king in 867 . They then moved on to Nottingham in Mercia , where they spent the winter of 867 ? 868 . Burgred was joined by King Æthelred of Wessex and his brother , the future King Alfred , for a combined attack on the Vikings , but they refused an engagement and in the end the Mercians bought peace with them . The following year , the Vikings conquered East Anglia . They returned to Mercia in 872 ; two years later they expelled Burgred , and Ceolwulf became king with their support . Ceolwulf was described by the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle as " a foolish king 's thegn " who was a puppet of the Vikings , but the historian Ann Williams regards this view as partial and distorted : he was accepted as a true king by the Mercians and by King Alfred .

In 877 the Vikings divided Mercia , taking the eastern part for themselves and leaving Ceolwulf with the west . The Vikings went on to attack Wessex , leaving Ceolwulf free to renew Mercian claims of hegemony in Wales . At almost the same time as Alfred 's victory over the Vikings in 878 at the Battle of Edington , Ceolwulf defeated and killed Rhodri Mawr , king of the north Welsh territory of Gwynedd . After Ceolwulf 's disappearance in 879 , Mercia began to fall under the hegemony of Wessex .

= = Life = =

= = Early rule = = =

Æthelred 's descent is unknown , and he does not appear to have been closely related to his immediate predecessors , although his name suggests possible descent from earlier Mercian kings . He may have been related to King Alfred 's Mercian father @-@ in @-@ law , Æthelred Mucel , and brother @-@ in @-@ law , Æthelwulf , who appears to have been a member of Æthelred 's court

from the mid 880s . Æthelred may have been the man of the same name who attested two Mercian charters in the late 860s , but he is not listed in the two surviving charters of Ceolwulf . Lists of witnesses to charters show that Æthelred 's witan (council) shared bishops and at least two ealdormen with Ceolwulf , but Ceolwulf 's thegns all disappeared . In the view of Ian Walker : " He was a royal ealdorman whose power base lay in the south @-@ west of Mercia in the former kingdom of the Hwicce around Gloucester . "

It is not known when Æthelred took over following Ceolred 's death or disappearance , but in the view of Thomas Charles @-@ Edwards , a historian of medieval Wales , Æthelred was almost certainly " Edryd Long @-@ Hair " , the leader of a Mercian army which invaded Gwynedd in 881 , and was defeated by Rhodri Mawr 's sons at the Battle of the Conwy . This was described by Welsh annals as " revenge by God for Rhodri " . The defeat forced Æthelred to abandon his ambitions in north Wales , but he continued to exercise overlordship over the south @-@ eastern Welsh kingdoms of Glywysing and Gwent . According to Alfred 's Welsh biographer Asser , Æthelred 's " might and tyrannical behaviour " forced these kingdoms to submit to the protection of King Alfred 's lordship . By 883 , Æthelred had accepted Alfred 's lordship . Charles @-@ Edwards suggests that in 881 ? 882 he tried to maintain his dominance in south @-@ east Wales , but Alfred offered his protection to Glywysing and Gwent , and in 882 ? 883 Æthelred accepted that West Saxon power made continued independence impossible . Charles @-@ Edwards comments :

The implication of all this is that the Mercian submission to Alfred ? a crucial step in the creation of a single English kingdom ? occurred not just because of one battle , Alfred 's victory over the Great Army at Edington in 878 , but also because of another , more distant battle , " God 's revenge " on the Mercians at the Conwy , when Anarawd of Gwynedd and his brothers defeated Æthelred and so brought about that collapse of the Mercian hegemony in Wales from which Alfred was only too pleased to benefit .

When Æthelred made a grant to Berkeley Abbey in 883 , he did it with the approval of King Alfred , thus acknowledging Alfred 's lordship . Thereafter he usually acted with Alfred 's permission , but issued some charters in his own name without reference to Alfred , such as at a meeting in Risborough in Buckinghamshire in 884 , showing that English Mercia extended quite far south @-@ east towards London .

After the Battle of Edington in 878 , Alfred established a network of fortified settlements , called burhs , in Wessex to protect his people and territory against Viking attacks , and when Æthelred accepted Alfred 's lordship the burhs were extended into Mercia . One of the burhs was Worcester , where Æthelred worked with its bishop and used the standing Roman walls in the town 's defences . Over the next two generations Worcester was transformed from an ecclesiastical settlement to a town with a diverse population of craftsmen .

London suffered severely from Viking attacks and was several times occupied by Viking armies . In 886 Alfred took possession of London , and according to Asser he " restored " the city and " made it habitable again " . He then handed control to Æthelred . Historians , however , disagree about the circumstances . According to Frank Stenton , Alfred recovered London by force from the Vikings and handed it to Æthelred because it had previously been a Mercian town , and he respected the traditions of other kingdoms . Marios Costambeys takes a similar view , arguing that Alfred 's decision was probably due to the need to maintain unity among the English who were outside Viking territory . Alfred Smyth suggests that the Chronicle 's account reflects bias in Alfred 's favour , and that Æthelred took charge because he had a greater role in London 's recovery than the West Saxon chronicler was willing to admit . Some versions of the Chronicle state that Alfred besieged London in 883 , and Simon Keynes argues that Alfred probably took London at that time and that the " occupation " in 886 may have been a restoration of London 's defences following Viking attacks close to the city in 885 .

Anglo @-@ Saxon London , called Lundenwic , was located a mile west of Roman Londinium , but Lundenwic was undefended , and the restoration was carried out inside the walls of the old Roman city , especially an area close to the River Thames now called Queenhithe , but which was then known as Æthelred 's Hythe after its Mercian ruler . Æthelred moved quickly to restore the area ; in 889 he and Alfred granted property there to the Bishop of Worcester , and in 899 they made another

grant to the Archbishop of Canterbury . Both bishops were , like Æthelred , Mercians and strong allies of King Alfred , who had the right to all tolls from markets along the river bank .

After the restoration of London , Alfred received the submission of " all the English people who were not under subjection to the Danes " , and the alliance between Wessex and Mercia was cemented by the marriage of Æthelred to Alfred 's oldest daughter , Æthelflæd . She is first recorded as Æthelred 's wife in a charter of 887 , but Keynes thinks that the marriage may have taken place two or three years earlier , and the historian Maggie Bailey dates it to between 882 and 887 , with the most likely political context being the occupation of London in 886 . Æthelred was probably much older than his wife . They had a daughter , Ælfwynn , and according to the twelfth century chronicler , William of Malmesbury , she was their only child . In King Alfred 's will , drawn up in the 880s , Æthelred was left a sword worth 100 mancuses .

In 892 , two Viking armies attacked eastern England , and Æthelred took part in the defence . After the defeat of one Viking leader , Hastein , Alfred became godfather to one of Hastein 's two sons and Æthelred to the other . Soon afterwards , the English captured Hastein 's wife and children , but they were returned to him because the sons were godsons of the English leaders . In 893 , Æthelred brought troops from London to join Alfred 's son Edward against a Viking army at Thorney in Buckinghamshire , but the Vikings were too strong for a direct attack so they were allowed to leave English territory . Later in the year , a larger Viking force marched from Essex through Mercia to the Welsh border , followed by Æthelred with a joint force of Mercians and West Saxons . Welsh kings joined Æthelred to meet the Vikings at the Battle of Buttington , where according to Smyth " these invaders were utterly routed ... in what was the most decisive battle in the war " , although Marios Costambeys states that the Vikings eventually cut their way out and retreated back to Essex . The Viking army finally dispersed in 896 . For much of the time , Alfred had been in the west country defending Devonshire , and in the view of Richard Abels : " King Alfred had little to do directly with the great victories enjoyed by the English in 893 ? 896 . His son , Edward , and his ealdormen , in particular his son @-@ in @-@ law , Æthelred , had won the glory . "

In the last years of the ninth century , three sub @-@ ealdormen ruled Mercia under Æthelred . Æthelflæd 's uncle , Æthelwulf , controlled western and possibly central Mercia , while the south and east were ruled by Æthelfrith , the father of Æthelstan Half @-@ King . Alhhelm was responsible for the lands bordering the northern Danelaw . Æthelwulf and Alhhelm are not recorded after the turn of the century , and Æthelfrith may have been Æthelflæd 's chief lieutenant when Æthelred 's health collapsed soon afterwards . Keynes sees Æthelfrith as an ealdorman of West Saxon origin , probably appointed by Alfred to look after his interests in south @-@ east Mercia .

Evidence from charters show that Æthelred and Æthelflæd supported religious communities . In 883 they freed Berkeley Abbey from obligations to the king 's feorm (payments in kind) , and in 887 they confirmed the possession of land and transferred manpower to Pyrton Minster in Oxfordshire . In 901 they gave land to Much Wenlock Abbey , and donated a gold chalice weighing thirty mancuses in honour of its former abbess , Saint Mildburgh . In 903 they negotiated a settlement over a former monastic estate which the bishops of Worcester had been trying to recover since the 840s , and Bishop Wærferth wrote " we never could get anywhere until Æthelred became lord of the Mercians " .

= = = Later life = = =

Some historians believe that at an unknown time in the decade 899 to 909 , Æthelred 's health collapsed and Æthelflæd became the effective ruler of Mercia . Cyril Hart and Maggie Bailey believe that it occurred by 902 . Bailey cites " Mercian Register " entries from 902 showing Æthelflæd acting alone or in conjunction with Edward in military operations . Irish annals called the Three Fragments also suggest that Æthelred was unable to take an active part in government from about 902 , although he did attend a meeting in 903 with King Edward , Æthelflæd and Ælfwynn . In 1998 Keynes suggested that Æthelred may have been incapacitated by illness at the end of his life , but in a summary of his career in 2014 Keynes does not mention this , stating that Æthelred and Æthelflæd cooperated with King Edward in campaigns against the Vikings . Martin Ryan also makes

no mention of a decline in Æthelred 's health , describing him as joining Edward in encouraging thegns to purchase land in Viking territories . In Michael Livingston 's view , he campaigned with Edward in Northumbria in 909 , and may have died as a result of wounds sustained at the Battle of Tettenhall in 910 .

According to William of Malmesbury , King Edward 's eldest son , the future King Æthelstan , was sent to be brought up at the court of Æthelred and Æthelflæd after Edward remarried in about 900 . This is supported by one independent piece of evidence . According to a transcript dating from 1304 in York 's archives , in 925 Æthelstan gave a grant of privileges to St Oswald 's Priory in Gloucester " according to a pact of paternal piety which formerly he pledged with Æthelred , ealdorman of the people of the Mercians " . When King Edward died in 924 , Æthelstan initially faced opposition at the West Saxon court , but was accepted as king in Mercia .

After Æthelred 's death in 911 , Æthelflæd ruled as " Lady of the Mercians " , but she did not inherit the Mercian territories of London and Oxford , which were taken by Edward . Æthelflæd died in 918 , and their daughter Ælfwynn briefly ruled Mercia until deposed by Edward the Elder , who took the territory under his direct control .

= = = St Oswald 's Priory , Gloucester = = =

Gloucester seems to have been the main seat of Æthelred 's and Æthelflæd 's power , and before 900 they founded a new minster there , dedicated to St Peter . In 909 a West Saxon and Mercian army raided Viking territory and seized the bones of the Northumbrian king and martyr , St Oswald , from Bardney in Lincolnshire . The bones were translated to the new Gloucester minster , which was renamed St Oswald 's Priory in his honour . Both Æthelred and Æthelflæd were buried there . The historian Martin Ryan sees the new minster as something like a Mercian royal mausoleum , to replace the one at Repton destroyed by the Vikings .

= = Æthelred 's status = =

Æthelred 's status is unclear , and this is reflected in the varying titles given to him by different historians . He is sometimes called " ealdorman " , but also " Lord of the Mercians " and " subking " . Coinage issued in English Mercia in Ceolred 's time named him as king , but in Æthelred 's time it named the West Saxon king , yet Æthelred issued some charters in his own name , implying royal authority . West Saxon sources refer to him as an ealdorman , emphasising Mercian subordination to the West Saxon monarchy , whereas Mercian ones describe him as Lord of the Mercians , and Celtic ones sometimes as King of Mercia . The late tenth @-@ century chronicler Æthelweard , who used sources independent of surviving versions of the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle , called him " King of the Mercians " .

King Edward 's influence over Mercia is unclear , and he may have had less power than his father . Edward 's charters show Æthelred and Æthelflæd as accepting his royal authority , but their own charters make no reference to an overlord , and some use expressions such as " holding , governing and defending the sole rule of the Mercians " , which come close to describing them as king and queen .

Pauline Stafford comments that " Alfred 's dominance in the 890s over Æthelred , Lord of the Mercians , was as debatable at the time as it still is . " In the view of Ann Williams , " though he accepted West Saxon overlordship , Æthelred behaved rather as a king of Mercia than an ealdorman " , and Charles Insley states that Mercia remained an independent kingdom until 920 . To the Welsh and Irish looking east , Mercian rulers still kept all their old regality until Æthelflæd 's death in 918 , and Nick Higham argues that : " Celtic visions of Æthelred and Æthelflæd as king and queen certainly offer a different , and equally valid , contemporary take on the complex politics of this transition to a new English state . "

Keynes takes the West Saxon view , arguing that Alfred created the " kingdom of the Anglo @-@ Saxons " , inherited by his son Edward the Elder in 899 , and Æthelred ruled Mercia under the king . Keynes points out that according to Asser , the Welsh king Anarawd submitted to Alfred on the

same terms as Æthelred ? " Namely that in every respect he would be obedient to the royal will " . Keynes regards the designation " K. [King] Æthelred II " in the Handbook of British Chronology as a " delightfully provocative " extension of the " received wisdom " that Mercia retained a real measure of independence in Æthelred 's time . However , Keynes also says :

Æthelred usually acted with the permission of or in association with King Alfred , but occasionally he acted independently of him . Although sometimes described as plain dux or ealdorman , his status was clearly quite different from that of other duces , for he is also accorded styles which aspire to divine grace and which appear to verge on the royal . In other words , there is no mistaking that the Mercians retained a conception of their ruler as a rightful successor to earlier kings , and a conception of their land as a kingdom with its own identity ; but there is also no mistaking that Æthelred moved in an Alfredian world .