

= Heart of a Woman (Etta James album) =

Heart of a Woman is an album by Etta James , released in June 1999 through RCA Records . The album consists of eleven love songs from James ' favorite female singers , as well as a recording of her most popular song " At Last " . Recorded in March 1999 , Heart of a Woman was produced by James and John Snyder , with Lupe DeLeon serving as executive producer . James ' two sons Donto and Sametto served as assistant producers , among other contributions ; guest musicians appearing on the album include Mike Finnigan on organ , Red Holloway and Jimmy Zavala on tenor saxophone , and Lee Thornburg on multiple instruments . Following its release , critical reception of Heart of a Woman was mixed . The album reached a peak position of number four on Billboard 's Top Blues Albums chart .

= = Background and composition = =

Heart of a Woman was released during a period of James ' career in which she parted from singing blues to experiment with country , jazz , and pop music , with mixed reception . Rolling Stone grouped the album in a " trifecta " with James ' previous (not counting the 1998 holiday album 12 Songs of Christmas) , and following studio albums , Life , Love & the Blues (1998) and Matriarch of the Blues (2000) .

Categorized by Rolling Stone as a jazz pop album , Heart of a Woman contains " cool , sensuous arrangements " between four and seven minutes in length . It consists of eleven love songs by James ' favorite female singers , including Billie Holiday , Carmen McRae , Sarah Vaughan , and Dinah Washington , along with a new recording of her most famous song " At Last " . The album was recorded in March 1999 , and produced by James and John Snyder , with Lupe DeLeon serving as executive producer . James ' two sons , Donto and Sametto , served as assistant producers , among other contributions . Guest musicians appearing on the album included : Mike Finnigan on organ , Red Holloway and Jimmy Zavala on tenor saxophone , and Lee Thornburg on multiple instruments .

Gene de Paul and Don Raye 's " You Don 't Know What Love Is " opens the album , followed by " Good Morning Heartache " , written by Ervin Drake , Dan Fisher , and Irene Higginbotham . The bossa nova arrangement of Sam Coslow and Arthur Johnston 's " My Old Flame " contains a saxophone solo by Red Holloway . Irving Berlin 's " Say It Isn 't So " is followed by James ' signature song " At Last " , written originally by Mack Gordon and Harry Warren .

Other love songs on the album include " Tenderly " by Walter Gross and Jack Lawrence , and " I Only Have Eyes for You " by Al Dubin . James ' vocals on Duke Ellington and Paul Francis Webster 's " I Got It Bad (and That Ain 't Good) " are " barely audible " as she sings " ... I ... can 't ... live without him . " " I Got It Bad " is followed by a cover of John Frederick Coots and Haven Gillespie 's 1933 popular song " You Go to My Head " . Mike Finnigan performs the Hammond organ solo on " A Sunday Kind of Love " and throughout the album , filling the gap between blues and jazz music . Closing the album are Sammy Cahn and Saul Chaplin 's " If It 's the Last Thing I Do " , and Alice Cooper 's " Only Women Bleed " . James had recorded " Only Women Bleed " previously .

= = Reception = =

Critical reception of the album was mixed . PopMatters ' review concluded that , given proper arrangements and material , James delivered jazz standards " with the same devastating power " demonstrated on past blues performances . Staff wrote that James combined jazz and blues elements successfully , " [creating] the sense of loneliness and desperation in which James has always excelled in expressing " . PopMatters ' review was positive overall , claiming James ' rough voice made her appear to be " in tune with the woeful nature " of the songs , though it insisted that her cover of " Only Women Bleed " was a " miscalculation of major proportions " . Allmusic 's Stephen Thomas Erlewine called James one of the best blues performers of the twentieth century and wrote in his review of the album that " she still possesses an exceptionally strong voice , robust

and filled with passion . " However , Erlewine also wrote that Heart of a Woman " never has the emotional impact James intended it to have " . Music critic Robert Christgau 's review simply reads " Torching cocktail cool " and recommended the tracks " My Old Flame " , and " I Only Have Eyes for You " . The Advocate 's Andrew Velez felt that " I Got It Bad (and That Ain 't Good) " was the album 's best track . " Steve Knopper of the Chicago Tribune thought the arrangements were " tinkly " and " meandering " , with James sounding as though " she 's learning a foreign language " . Knopper considered " Only Women Bleed " to be the album 's most soulful track .

= = Track listing = =

" You Don 't Know What Love Is " (Gene de Paul , Don Raye) ? 5 : 28
" Good Morning Heartache " (Ervin Drake , Dan Fisher , Irene Higgenbotham) ? 5 : 28
" My Old Flame " (Sam Coslow , Arthur Johnston) ? 6 : 20
" Say It Isn 't So " (Irving Berlin) ? 4 : 55
" At Last " (Mack Gordon , Harry Warren) ? 4 : 40
" Tenderly " (Walter Gross , Jack Lawrence) ? 5 : 27
" I Only Have Eyes for You " (Al Dubin , Warren) ? 6 : 35
" I Got It Bad (and That Ain 't Good) " (Duke Ellington , Paul Francis Webster) ? 6 : 25
" You Go to My Head " (John Frederick Coots , Haven Gillespie) ? 4 : 21
" A Sunday Kind of Love " (Barbara Belle , Anita Leonard , Louis Prima , Stan Rhodes) ? 6 : 00
" If It 's the Last Thing I Do " (Sammy Cahn , Saul Chaplin) ? 5 : 47
" Only Women Bleed " (Alice Cooper , Dick Wagner) ? 4 : 48

Track listing adapted from Allmusic .

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from Allmusic .

= = Chart history = =

Heart of a Woman reached a peak position of number four on Billboard 's Top Blues Albums chart . By November 1999 , the album had remained on the chart for seventeen weeks , and remained at number twelve . In 1999 , James had five albums chart in the United States : Life , Love & the Blues , Heart of a Woman , 12 Songs of Christmas (1998) , as well as two compilation albums : Best of Etta James , and Her Best (1997) .