Beth Hart - My California (2010)

01. My California 02. Life Is Callin 03. Happiness ... Any Day Now 04. Love Is The hardest 05. Bad Love Is Good Enough 06. Drive play 07. Sister Heroine 08. Take It Easy On Me 09. Like You (And Everyone Else) play 10. Everybody So Sober 11. Weight Og The World 12. Oh Me Oh My (Bonus)
Musicians: Beth Hart - Vocals, keys, acoustic guitar. Jon Nichols - Electric and acoustic guitars, background vocals. Tom Lilly - Electric and acoustic bass guitars, background vocals. Todd Wolf - Drums, percussion.

Beth Hart is a brilliant talent and has the ability to write very personal material about her life and struggles. As a recovering addict/alcoholic and as someone who suffers from bipolar disorder, she has put it all in her songs and still manages to leave a positive and uplifting impact. I heard her explain in an interview that her producer wanted her to make an album that is based on storytelling. Beth has done that very well. This album is not as rocking as her previous works, yet the content of the writing is strong. Her song Sister Heroine about her sister who died of addiction is one of her best songs to date. The song in which she thanks her parents for what they have done for her (Weight of the World) is also among her best. Other tracks that stand out are Love is the Hardest, Like You and Everybody is Sober.

The core of the album is openness, honesty and sharing things that will help others know they are not alone. Someone did go a little crazy with the "studio magic" on this album. I say next time save the money. 24 karat gold does not need a veneer. If you listen to Live at Paradiso or watch the Live at Paradiso dvd you will know what I mean. We do get a reprieve from studio magic on the bonus track thankfully. Regardless I still give the album five stars because of the songwriting and performance. This is a "different" album but another impressive addition to Beth Hart's entire body of work. This woman is a must to see in concert. p.s. the photography and design of the cd is very well done. ---Jeanie (United States), amazon.com

During her rather turbulent career, Beth Hart has been compared to Janis Joplin and Joan Armatrading, but anyone seeing her raucous and powerful live shows would do well to spot those references. As with many singers and bands, her albums have often struggled to capture the ingredients of those live performances, though. But here they have decided to do something different.

Inspired by blues and gospel, Hart has always laid herself bare on record, leaving nothing in the studio. But never has she sounded like she does here. My California moves her firmly into Melissa Etheridge territory in sound and style. Although more commercial sounding, there is still a rawness alongside some thumping tunes and moments of extreme tenderness.

The opening title track will surprise, and may even scare some of her hardcore fans. It is a spacious reflection on missing your home, with guitars and keyboards moving between speakers as Hart's voice trembles soulfully. Piano led ballads 'Life Is Calling' and 'Love Is The Hardest' might be a little too middle of the road for some, but they have infectious hooks, and either one could provide Hart's biggest hit to date.

Producer Rune Westberg challenged the singer to reign in the screaming of her vocals more than ever before, and tell some stories. He wanted an album with one kind of sound, rather than the mix fans are used to. And he has succeeded in finding something new and magical. Many of the songs have a vulnerability and fragility, which draws the listener closer. Such is the intensity captured in the studio, you can almost hear her voice crack on 'Take It Easy On Me' as she pleads "If I gave it up and let the wall come down, would you take my hand, would you show me how."

Hart is someone who has struggled with addiction and the subject is touched on throughout ("the drugs make me sane but don't make me better" on 'Like You') but much here is about her internal emotional struggles and relationships with family. 'Sister Heroine' is about her late sister, but ends up being one of the more positive tracks, while 'Weight of the World' is a tender trip down memory lane to a youth long lost.

Beth Hart has had some success in the States so far but the songs on My California are so

strong, it is hard not to think her career has taken a turn. On this form there is very little out there to compete, for raw, yet well-produced emotional rock. ---dailymusicguide.com

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