

Incognito – Amplified Soul (2014)

Written by bluesever

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01 – Amplify My Soul (Part 1) 02 – I Couldn't Love You More 03 – Rapture 04 – Hands Up If You Wanna Be Loved 05 – Hats (Make Me Wanna Holler) 06 – Silver Shadow 07 – Deeper Still 08 – Amplify My Soul (Part 2) 09 – Something 'Bout July 10 – Day Or Night 11 – Wind Sorceress 12 – Another Way 13 – I See The Sun 14 – Never Known A Love Like This 15 – The Hands Of Time 16 – Stop Running Away Jean-Paul "Bluey" Maunick (vocals, guitar) Katie Leone, Vanessa Haynes, Chiara Hunter, Tony Momrelle (vocals) Nigel Hitchcock (alto saxophone) Jamie Anderson (tenor saxophone) Sid Gould (trumpet, flugelhorn) Trevor Mires (trombone) Matt Cooper (piano, Fender Rhodes piano, synthesizer) Francesco Mendolia (drums) Joao Caetano (percussion)

In 2013, Jean-Paul "Bluey" Maunick stepped out with his first solo album, *Leap of Faith* -- a stylistically varied set on which he performed the lead vocals -- but he quickly went to work on fresh material with the group he has led for over four decades. *Leap of Faith* evidently didn't drain his creativity, as *Amplified Soul* is another double-length Incognito album, 70 minutes in duration. Though it doesn't feature Maysa Leak or any collaborator on the level of Transatlantic R.P.M. contributors Chaka Khan, Leon Ware, and Al McKay, it certainly isn't short on powerful and uplifting lead vocal turns. Maunick works with some names familiar to Incognito fans and continues to keep it fresh with new voices. Most notably, there's the underexposed Deborah Bond on "I See the Sun," a gorgeously rolling number near the end that could just as easily follow the album's introduction. Melonie Crosdale leads "Rapture," another beaming, kicked-back groove that stands with the group's best work. They take it back a little farther than their typical mid-'70s to early-'80s well of inspiration for the strutting "Hats (Makes Me Wanna Holler)," one of their funkier straight-R&B songs. At this point, even the most casual listener knowledgeable about the group's inspirations won't be surprised that a piece titled "Wind Sorceress" resembles Mizell-era Donald Byrd. And yet, despite the obvious likeness, it's fully enjoyable, filled with little details that make it more than a mere tribute. As usual, Maunick either wrote or co-wrote all the original material, and there's a cover -- a festive version of Atlantic Starr's 1985 single "Silver Shadow," fronted by Vanessa Haynes. ---Andy Kellman, Rovi

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