

Bette Midler - Bette Midler (1973)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)
Wednesday, 14 October 2020 11:41 -

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1 *Skylark* 3:02 2 *Drinking Again* 2:46 3 *Breaking Up Somebody's Home* 3:47 4 *Surabaya Johnny* 4:52 5 *I Shall Be Released* 4:55 6a *Optimistic Voices* 2:26 6b *Lullaby Of Broadway* 7 *In The Mood* 2:37 8a *Uptown* 3:22 8b *Don't Say Nothin' Bad (About My Baby)* 8c *Da Doo Run Run* 9 *Twisted* 2:23 10 *Higher & Higher (Your Love Keeps Lifting Me)* 4:08
Backing Vocals – Ann S. Clark, Charlotte Crosley, Gale Kantor, Merle Miller, Myrna Smith, Robin Grean, Sharon Redd, Shirley Brewer, Sylvia Shemwell, Tasha Thomas
Bass – Chuck Rainey, Milt Hinton, Stu Woods, Will Lee, Bill Salter
Concertmaster – Gene Orloff
Drums – Bernard Purdie, Grady Tate, Rick Morotta, Steven Gadd
Drums, Percussion – Luther Rix
Guitar – Cornell Dupree, David Spinozza, Frank Vento, Hugh McCracken
Keyboards – Don Grolnick, Ken Ascher, Pat Rebillot
Percussion – Ralph MacDonald
Producer, Percussion, Piano, Arranged By, Conductor, Backing Vocals – Barry Manilow
Producer, Percussion, Remix – Arif Mardin
Synthesizer – Kenneth Bichel
Vocals - Bette Midler

Bette Midler's flexible and interestingly toned voice would alone have been sufficient to propel her to popularity, but the "divine Miss M" reaches the masses with another device – the use of tasteful music that has an appeal to all, regardless of which side the generation gap you may fall. Her music is not new or in any way innovative. Rather, it seeks to entertain with its own unique character, a slightly tongue-in-cheek aura of nostalgia for the glamour of the female singing stars of the 40's and the 50's.

She has surrounded herself with the starlet's mystique, becoming an untouchable red-flamed goddess to be worshipped from afar. And, with an eye on album sales, it seems to be working.

The music on BETTE MIDLER is extremely listenable, making little demands on the listener.

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“Skylark” arbitrarily opens the album which has no definite side one or two marked) with a soaring arrangement of the Hoagy Carmichael and Johnny Mercer song using only a single piano and the remarkable intense thread of Miss M’s vocal. “Drinking Again” is done in the same way, and it points out both in theme and atmosphere her early days of nightclub singing.

“Breaking Up Somebody’s Home” is a change of pace with its infectious rhythm and funky guitar backup. “Surabaya Johnny” manages to be melodramatic with a part monologue, part song cry of protest from a young woman haven been used by a slick traveler who came through from Burma. Miss Midler overacts deliberately to make the song an amusing farce of similar songs of its type. The side is finished with a moving arrangement of Bob Dylan’s “I Shall Be Released.”

A medley of “Optimistic Voices” ‘which reminds me of the Munchkins chorus in “Wizard of Oz” and “Lullaby of Broadway” starts the reverse side. Miss Midler is overdubbed to become a trio like she was in “Boogie-Woogie Bugie Boy,” in medley, as well as in the next song, “In the Mood.” She and Barry Manilow have added lyrics to the old hit, but have kept its original flavor. Another medley follows of “Uptown” and “Da Doo Run Run” which is the least memorable track on the album.

“Twisted” is told in song by a “crazy girl” to her gossiping friends about her experiences with the psychoanalyst. Low key humor is in abundance in the song which runs true to Miss M’s slightly satirical nature. Finally is “Higher and Higher (Your Love Keeps Lifting M e) ” in which she unleashes the full intensity of her voice for a satisfying conclusion to the album.

Even though BETTE MIDLER is revivalist camp, it makes for good all around listening. And there stands the full m e a s u r e of its worth. ---bootlegbetty.com

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