India.Arie - SongVersation (2013)

1 Soulbird Intro 0:35 2 Just Do You 3:12 3 This Love 3:25 4 Nothing That I Love More 2:53 5 Flowers 3:55 6 Cocoa Butter 3:56 7 Soulbird Interlude: Trombone 0:36 8 Moved By You 4:50 9 Life I Know 3:22 10 Break The Shell 4:09 11 Soulbird Rise 4:10 12 Thy Will Be Done 4:34 13 Brother's Keeper 3:42 14 One 5:25 15 Songbird Outro: Clarinet 0:35 16 I Am Light 3:52 17 Soulbird Reprise: Ney 0:37 18 Thank You 3:44 19 6th Avenue 2:54 20 Strange Fruit 5:26 Fatih Ahiskali Oud Mehmet Akatay Percussion Rafet Alik Kanun Ozer Arkun Cello Özer Arkun Cello, Ney Carrie Bailey Violin Conelius "Slick" Barnes Vocals (Background) Ozan Bayrasa String Score, Vocals Drew Bowman Bass Chris Bruce Guitar, Guitar (Acoustic), Guitar (Electric) Chantae Cann Vocals (Background) John Catchings Cello Göksun Cavdar Bass, Clarinet, Clarinet (Bass) Traneshia "Truth" Chiles Vocals (Background) Carol Corless Package Production Anthony David Vocals (Background) Ametria Dock Vocals (Background) Dvora Englefield Publishing Nurcan Eren Vocals Marcus Finney Drums Joey Gonzales Percussion Hasan Gözetlik Trombone, Trumpet Dennis Hamm Keyboards David Ryan Harris Guitar, Guitar (Electric), Keyboards, Producer, Programming Sean Hurley Bass India.Arie Guitar, Liner Notes, Primary Artist, Producer, Vocals Istanbul Strings Strings Bob Lewis Trombone, Trumpet Mercy Myra Vocals (Background) Blue Miller Guitar, Guitar (Acoustic) Joseph "Steel" Miller Drums Julio Miranda Guitar Gramps Morgan Featured Artist, Vocals (Background) Quinn Drums Drew Ramsey Bass (Electric), Guitar, Guitar (Electric) Michael Ruff Piano, Producer Shannon Sanders Bass, Keyboards, Piano, Producer, Programming, Trumpet, Vocals (Background) Khari Simmons Bass India Arie Simpson Composer J'on Simpson Vocals (Background) Serhan Yasdiman Fretless Guitar, Guitar

Back with Motown, India.Arie is rejuvenated for her fifth album, which follows a lengthy hiatus. A series of mishaps, combined with some dissatisfaction regarding the sound of her recordings, prompted the break. She even contemplated leaving the industry. However, only the most attentive listeners will hear a considerable difference between SongVersation and the Testimony albums. Largely a low-key, gently uplifting affair with a soft, warm glow, 11 of its 16 tracks are enhanced with assistance from several Turkish musicians -- including percussionists, horn players, an oudist, and the Istanbul Strings -- who were recorded at the studio of Sezen

Aksu (one of the guests on Testimony, Vol. 2). Longtime co-producer and instrumentalist Shannon Sanders remains, while new associate David Ryan Harris (Dionne Farris, John Mayer) is another major factor. The album's upbeat tone is set with the driving "Just Do You," a career highlight boasting a chorus that recalls the pre-chorus of Michael Jackson's "Rock with You." Apart from certain accents from the Turkish musicians, none of the material will surprise anybody. Sweet, sighing, relaxed numbers like "Flowers" ("You're the moral compass directing me to light") and "Cocoa Butter" ("You are like cocoa butter on my heart") are among the most India.Arie-like songs laid down. Everything -- most exemplified by "Break the Shell," inspired by an encounter with Cicely Tyson -- transmits positivity, even when she admits that, as a woman "almost four decades in" with neither a lifelong partner nor children, she's unsure of her position in life. It's evident that Arie's in a good place, both creatively and personally, yet SongVersation is not about self-satisfaction. She has no trouble bringing her listeners along. ---Andy Kellman, AllMusic Review

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