Mariah Carey – The Ballads (2009)

01. Hero 4:20 02. One Sweet Day (Feat. Boyz II Men) 4:42 03. Vision Of Love 3:30 04. Without You 3:35 05. Can't Let Go 4:27 06. Love Takes Time 3:48 07. I'll Be There (Feat. Trey Lorenz) 4:44 08. Thank God I Found You (Make It Last Remix) (Feat. Nas & Fat Joe) 5:10 09. Endless Love (Feat. Luther Vandross) 4:21 10. I Still Believe 3:56 11. My All 3:52 12. The Roof 5:15 13. When You Believe (Feat. Whitney Houston) 4:34 14. Anytime You Need A Friend 4:27 15. Always Be My Baby 4:19 16. Dreamlover 3:54 17. How Much (Feat. Usher) 3:30 18. Reflections 3:21

In 1998, it would have been a cheap joke to say that Mariah Carey had no other kind of hits than ballads, but in the ensuing decade she steadily remade herself into an R&B diva, obscuring if not quite erasing the well-mannered adult contemporary singer of the '90s. The 2009 compilation The Ballads -- released just before Valentines Day 2009 -- attempts to turn back the clock by focusing just on those AC tunes -- 18 of them, in fact, including such mammoth hits as "Hero," "One Sweet Day," "Vision of Love," "I'll Be There," "I Still Believe," "Dreamlover," and "Always Be My Baby." Of course, this concentration on middle of the road ballads is a side effect of label affiliation: The Ballads is a product of Sony, who had Mariah during the '90s, before the club R&B overshadowed these office-friendly hits, so it's easier for them to cobble together a comp of Carey at her most sentimental. And that's what The Ballads is: nothing but big love songs sung in a big voice. For fans who have missed this side of Mariah in the 2000s, this is a welcome reminder of what they used to love. ---Stephen Thomas Erlewine, AllMusic Review

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