

Dionne Warwick - Now (2012)

Written by bluelover

Tuesday, 25 February 2014 16:50 - Last Updated Wednesday, 28 December 2016 14:42

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1 *(There's) Always Something There To Remind Me* 2 *Are You There (With Another Girl)* 3 *Don't Make Me Over* 4 *Love Is Still The Answer* 5 *99 Miles From LA* 6 *Be Aware* 7 *Reach Out* 8 *Is There Anybody Out There?* 9 *I Just Have To Breathe* 10 *It Was Almost Like A Song* 11 *Make It Easy On Yourself* 12 *I Say A Little Prayer* Dionne Warwick - vocals Ann Lehmann, Young Ham, Sarah Crocker – violin Ellen Westermann, Jeanne LeBlanc – cello Ben Butler - Guitar Henry Hey - Keyboards Rob Mounsey – Piano David Finck – Bass Jeff Kievit, Kadleck – Trumpet, Flugelhorn Mark McLean - Drums Backing Vocals – Catherine Russell, Fonzi Thornton, Jill Dell'Abate, Vaneese Thomas Concertmaster – Elena Barere

Few artists have had a more simpatico relationship with a songwriting team than Dionne Warwick enjoyed with Burt Bacharach and Hal David; Bacharach and David wrote the majority of Warwick's biggest and best-loved hits of the 1960s and '70s, and hardly anyone has interpreted their songs with as much grace and intelligence as she brought to her work. Given that Warwick's early run of chart successes established her as one of the finest pop vocalists of her generation, it's not surprising that she would be eager to cut a new album of Bacharach and David material, but *Now*, released to mark Warwick's 50th anniversary as a recording artist, bends this idea in an unfortunate way. *Now* is dominated by new performances of B&D compositions Warwick recorded in the past (including some of her biggest hits as well as some relative obscurities), along with four newer songs Bacharach and David each wrote with other collaborators. The album is lushly produced by Phil Ramone, with arrangements that suggest smooth jazz rather than the adult but AM-friendly pop of Warwick's heyday, and the accompaniment, expert as it may be, tends to buff down the emotional edges that made these songs so satisfying, and blunting their melodic ingenuity. The new songs are serviceable, but they don't match the high standard of the classics featured elsewhere on the album; however, Warwick is at her best on the fresher material, where she shows she's still a song stylist of considerable talent and keen instincts. It's the remakes that call her current abilities into question: on "(There's) Always Something There to Remind Me," "Don't Make Me Over," and "Make It Easy on Yourself," Warwick sings the songs in a lower key that she did in the original versions, and the comparison reveals her upper register has been worn by time and her instrument isn't as supple as it once was. Warwick is still a fine, thoughtful vocalist by any

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standard, but these new interpretations force the 72-year-old singer to compete with her twenty-something self, and though her wealth of experience certainly shows, the physical limitations of her voice, coupled with the overly slick production, make these new recordings noticeably inferior to the originals. If Dionne Warwick had chosen to record a set of classic standards (or Bacharach & David tunes that had eluded her in the past), Now could have been a real late-career winner; as it is, it simply reveals she still sounds great, but not as great as she once did, and you'll probably be more likely to reach for your copy of The Dionne Warwick Collection: Her All-Time Greatest Hits than to spin this again. ---Mark Deming, Rovi

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