

Carly Simon - Never Been Gone [2009]

Written by bluesever

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Carly Simon - Never Been Gone (2009)



01. *The Right Thing To Do* 3:44 02. *It Happens Every Day* 4:19 03. *Never Been Gone* 2:54
04. *Boys In The Trees* 4:26 05. *Let The River Run* 3:16 06. *You're So Vain* 5:08 07. *You
Belong To Me* 4:13 08. *No Freedom* 3:38 09. *That's The Way I've Always Heard It Should Be*
5:18 10. *Coming Around Again* 4:52 11. *Anticipation* 4:51 12. *Songbird* 2:36

After the 2008 commercial disaster that was Carly Simon's *This Kind of Love*, issued on the now-defunct Starbucks' Hear Music imprint, this collection of rearranged and re-recorded versions of her hits seems like a logical step backward in order to move forwards. Released on the Iris imprint and produced by "Paphiopedillium" (a group effort comprised of Simon, her son Benjamin Taylor, Larry Ciancia, Peter Cato, and David Saw, the band of players on this set), Simon's on acoustic guitar with her voice right up front. The arrangements are considerably starker than their original versions (she doesn't have the same kind of recording budget as she did when she was with the major labels, but perhaps she would have chosen this manner of delivering these songs even if she had), and her voice is considerably lower, dictating that she transpose keys on many of these selections. That said, hearing songs such as "Boys in the Trees," with its faux-Brazilian rhythms and her ever-so-slightly more raspy delivery, is in some ways preferable to its original single version, simply because it is more believable. Others, however, don't fare so well. "You Belong to Me" has a lite-funk bassline and backbeat with the swirling piano; her voice is unable to fill a microphone the way it once could, and relies heavily on backing chorus vocals in a way that it never did before. The notorious "You're So Vain" sounds here like it comes more out of time and space, as if she is singing from the place of painful memory and reminiscence, than as a song that relates the importance of the learning experience it originally provided for her. It's more fragile, less militant, less angry, and is far lower in pitch than its original version was. The backing musical accompaniment lends the track a touch of immediacy, but it doesn't redeem the feeling of nostalgia in the vocal. "Anticipation" is so utterly tender and wispy, it feels like a brand new song -- and yes, that's a good thing. The melody is there, the arrangement is beautifully supportive, but the song is sung from the palace of wisdom in this version, and while it cannot replace the original, it becomes a beautiful addendum. The true melancholy and even darkness in "That's The Way I've Always Heard It Should Be" is utterly present in this version, which is all the more striking given when it was

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written; this comes off as a song of surrender more than one of joy (which is what it's usually associated with). This kind of "redo-the-hits" project -- very common from veteran artists in the 21st century -- is almost always a mixed bag, and Never Been Gone is no exception. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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