

Free – Heartbreaker (1972)

Written by bluesever

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Side 1 01 - *Wishing Well* (P. Rodgers, S. Kirke, T. Yamauchi, P. Kossoff, R. Bundrick) 02 - *Come Together In The Morning* (P. Rodgers) 03 - *Travellin In Style.* (P. Rodgers, S. Kirke, T. Yamauchi, P. Kossoff, R. Bundrick) 04 - *Heartbreaker.* (P. Rodgers) Side 2 01 - *Muddy Water.* (R. Bundrick) 02 - *Common Mortal Man.* (R. Bundrick) 03 - *Easy On My Soul* (P. Rodgers) 04 - *Seven Angels* (P. Rodgers)

Musicians: Paul Rodgers - lead vocals, guitars, piano. Simon Kirke - drums, percussion, rhythm guitar, backing vocals. Tetsu Yamauchi - bass guitar, percussion Rabbit Bundrick - piano, organ, backing vocals Paul Kossoff - lead guitar

Free's return in 1972 was scarred by any number of traumas, not least of all the departure of bassist Andy Fraser and the virtual incapacity of guitarist Paul Kossoff -- one-half of the original band, and the lion's share of its spirit as well. But did their erstwhile bandmates let it show? Not a jot. The hastily recruited Tetsu Yamauchi, and vocalist Paul Rodgers himself, filled the breach instrumentally, and probably 50 percent of the ensuing *Heartbreaker* ranks among Free's finest ever work. Of course, any record that can open with the sheer majesty of "Wishing Well," Rodgers' so-evocative tribute to Kossoff, is immediately going to ascend to the halls of greatness, all the more so since Kossoff himself is in such fine form across both this cut and the next three -- completing side one of the original vinyl, "Come Together in the Morning," "Travellin' in Style," and "Heartbreaker" add up to the band's most convincing sequence of songs since the days of *Fire and Water*. Further into the disc, two contributions from another new recruit, keyboard player John Bundrick, fall a little flat, a fate they share with the previously unreleased "Hand Me Down/Turn Me Round," one of the 2002 remaster's six bonus tracks. But a pair of solo Rodgers songs, "Easy on My Soul" and "Seven Angels," close the album with as much emotion as it opened on, and one could well argue that, after such a treat, the aforementioned bonus tracks are all but unnecessary, especially as the first few simply offer outtakes, alternates, and B-sides from the sessions themselves. As the CD wraps up, however, two final tracks reveal what happened once the album was completed, peeping into the band's rehearsal room on the eve of their summer tour of Japan to catch "Heartbreaker" and "Easy on My Soul" in such rough but eloquently heavenly form that this most emotionally weighted of Free's albums could demand no deeper coda. --- Dave Thompson, allmusic.com

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