Ben Harper – Welcome To The Cruel World (1994)

01. The Three Of Us 2:35 02. Whipping Boy 5:31 03. Breakin' Down 4:00 04. Don't Take That Attitude To Your Grave 4:25 05. Waiting On An Angel 3:53 06. Mama's Got A Girlfriend Now 2:29 07. Forever 3:23 08. Like A King 4:18 09. Pleasure And Pain 3:44 10. Walk Away 3:49 11. How Many Miles Must We March? 3:07 12. Welcome To The Cruel World 5:36 13. I'll Rise 3:35 Ben Harper- (Vocals, Acoustic & Electric Guitar, Dobro); Taylor- (Background Vocals); Suzie Katayama- (Cello); Richard Cook- (Uillean Pipes); Gail Deadrick- (Piano); Jelani Jones, Kevin Williams, Clyde Allen, Clarence Butler, Clabe Hangan, Kenneth McDaniel, John John McKnight- (Accordion, Bass); Rock Deadrick- (Drums, Percussion, Background Vocals).

The full range of Ben Harper's influences would not come to bear until later albums, but his debut, Welcome to the Cruel World, lays a strong foundation. "Like a King" and "Take That Attitude to Your Grave" burn with a political conviction rarely heard during the 1990s. "Forever" has a tenderness which demonstrates Harper's emotional range. Lackluster hippie jams that cultivated his early following may have served a purpose but feel fluffy by comparison when compared to the meatier tracks. Ben closes the album with a song that frequently closes his concerts, "I'll Rise." This song, built around Maya Angelou's 1979 poem "And Still I Rise," reminds one of art's ability to pierce through society, self, and the soul. --- Ryan Randall Goble, Rovi

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