Bonnie Raitt – Slipstream (2012)

01 – Used To Rule The World 02 – Right Down The Line 03 – Million Miles 04 – You Can't Fail Me Now 05 – Down To You play 06 – Take My Love With You 07 – Not Cause I Wanted To play 08 – Ain't Gonna Let You Go 09 – Marriage Made In Hollywood 10 – Split Decision 11 – Standing In The Doorway 12 – God Only Knows

It's been seven years since Bonnie Raitt released Souls Alike, and a lot of life has happened. Losing her parents, brother and a best friend has left the veteran blues/soul rocker with plenty to think about—and that pensiveness colors Slipstream with knowing acceptance, nuanced takes on loss and a grace that finds splendor in the raw places.

On the hushed, gut-string "What I Had To Do," there are amends being made, regret expressed. Her voice a muted ember, she owns her part of it, including the haunted recognition of knowing what's gone. Seeking tempers Joe Henry's lovely "God Only Knows," a piano and voice reckoning of will and power in both large contexts and personal dynamics. With detail upon detail, the conflicted nature of humanity is considered—and finding beauty amongst the wreckage rises as the truth that will save you, or so her claret voice seems to suggest.

That same stoicism in the knowing ignites Bob Dylan's "Standing In A Doorway," the conflict between what is, what one wants and how one gets by. With a languid tempo, the pain of rejection ripples as the guitar offers a nonverbal witness to ache and quivering dignity.

Raitt knows about making things work. The quintuple-platinum, triple Grammy-winning Nick of Time arrived after she separated from Warner Brothers Records, her longtime home. With

Slipstream, the acolyte of Sippie Wallace and John Lee Hooker takes her music to even more introspective places—and her assessments make this even more adult. “Marriage Made in Hollywood” tackles the hook ’em nature of the sensationalism and tragedy for profit mentality that sacrifices dignity and the indulged on an altar of hubris and entertainment.

Not that Slipstream is somber. There’s “Take My Love With You,” a silken affirmation of the heart that suggests “Nick of Time.” Even in recognizing life and love’s difficulties, there is the desire for abiding love. The same can be said for the staunch raver “Ain’t Gonna Let You Go,” which celebrates romance with an unlikely paramour.

Raitt brings a reggae undertow to the late Gerry Rafferty’s “Right Down The Line.” There’s blazing blues on “Down To You” and “Split Decision,” both bristling with the joy of electric guitar jammage between Raitt, George Marinelli and NRBQ mainstay Al Anderson.

Indeed, Raitt’s musicianship roots are showing. Even Dylan’s “Million Miles” finds a straight-up acoustic blues pocket that feels so good. Buoying the knowing, she takes what is for how it is, while acknowledging “I try to get closer, but I’m still a million miles away from you.”

The gaps and margins are the marks of grown-up life. How you weather those changes makes living fulfilling. In the end, there is blind faith: in self, in love, in perhaps God Almighty as witnessed on “You Can’t Fail Me Now,” a meditation on truly unconditional love in even our most busted places. For Raitt, it seems what’s broken only gets stronger—and wiser. ---Holly Gleason, pastemagazine.com

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