

Cat Stevens – New Masters (1967/1989)

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1 Kitty 2:17 2 I'm So Sleepy 2:17 3 Northern Wind 2:45 4 The Laughing Apple 2:33 5 Smash Your Heart 2:55 6 Moonstone 2:11 7 The First Cut Is The Deepest 2:59 8 I'm Gonna Be King 2:24 9 Ceylon City 2:23 10 Blackness Of The Night 2:25 11 Come On Baby (Shift That Log) 3:42 12 I Love Them All 2:04 13 Image Of Hell 3:03 14 Lovely City (When Do You Laugh) 2:36 15 The View From The Top 3:29 16 Here Comes My Wife 2:56 17 It's A Super (Dupa) Life 2:46 18 Where Are You 2:56 19 A Bad Night 3:07 Cat Stevens - Composer, Guitar, Keyboards, Producer, Vocals Directed By – Alan Tew, Arthur Greenslade, David Whitaker, Ivor Raymonde, Lew Warburton, Mike Vickers, Phil Dennys

New Masters is as uneven musically as its predecessor, *Matthew & Son*, was bold. It was recorded after Cat Stevens had enjoyed a trio of hit singles of his own and a pair of hits ("Here Comes My Baby," "First Cut Is the Deepest") as a songwriter, but also after he'd started drinking regularly and the hits had stopped coming as easily. As he had also broken with his producer, Mike Hurst, it was -- according to Andy Neill -- truly a lawyers' record, in the sense that attorneys were all over the studio during the recording, representing both sides of the dispute. And with the record label caught in the middle, the resulting album was allowed to die on the vine in 1967/1968 (though Decca was able to sell it in profusion when it was reissued [especially in America] when Stevens re-emerged as a popular singer/songwriter in the early '70s). In a sense, it's more of the same as *Matthew & Son* but, intrinsically, not as interesting as a late 1967 release, as the earlier record was as an early 1967 release. The quirky, folky pop sound is there, on songs like "Kitty" and "Northern Wind." Some of it's highly derivative -- "The Laughing Apple" owing a bit to "Greenback Dollar," among other songs -- interspersed with pop balladry ("Smash Your Heart") and whimsy ("Moonstone," "Ceylon City"), plus the author's version of his own pop-soul standard "The First Cut Is the Deepest." ---Bruce Eder, Rovi

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