Joe Cocker – Heart & Soul (2004)



1. What's Going On 2. Chain Of Fools 3. One 4. I Who Have Nothing 5. Maybe I'm Amazed 6. I Keep Forgetting 7. I Put A Spell On You 8. Every Kind Of People 9. Love Don't Live Here Anymore 10. Don't Let Me Be Lonely 11. Jealous Guy 12. Everybody Hurts

Joe Cocker – vocals, executive producer Jeff Baxter – guitar Jeff Beck – guitar Gene Black – guitar Eric Clapton – guitar Shane Fontayne – guitar Bruce Gaitsch – acoustic guitar Michael Landau – guitar Steve Lukather – guitar Dean Parks – guitar Michael Thompson – guitar Ray Neapolitan – bass, executive producer Leland Sklar – bass C. J. Vanston – bass, keyboards, producer, mixing, engineer Bruce Eskovitz – saxophone Nick Lane – trombone Chris Botti – trumpet Bill Churchville – trumpet Chris Tedesco – trumpet Jerry Goodman – violin Alexander Adhami – santoor Ray Brinker – drums Vinnie Colaiuta – drums Rafael Padilla – percussion Bernie Barlow – backing vocals Terry Dexter – backing vocals C.C. White – backing vocals Shelly Berg – conductor

When he came to popular attention in the late 1960s, Joe Cocker reinvigorated and to a certain extent reinvented the art of interpretive singing at a time when it seemed to have been put in the shade permanently by the rise of singing songwriters led by Bob Dylan and the Beatles. Just when it seemed that no one but the songwriters themselves had the right to sing their songs, Cocker came along giving a gruff, pleading rendition of the Beatles' "With a Little Help From My Friends" that stood in stark contrast to Ringo Starr's happy-go-lucky version. But on his many albums, Cocker usually made sure to balance his carefully selected covers of well-known material with previously unknown tunes so that he was able to originate some material. On Heart & Soul, which marks the 60-year-old singer's return to major-label status (it was released on EMI internationally in October 2004 and on Universal's New Door imprint in the U.S. in February 2005), he doesn't bother with the new stuff; this one's all standards. The songs date from the 1950s, '60s, '70s, and '90s, and are drawn from R&B, pop/rock, and alternative rock stalwarts ranging from Screamin' Jay Hawkins to former Beatles and contemporary acts U2 and R.E.M.. Producer Jeffrey C.J. Vanston makes a point of referencing the hit versions of the songs in the arrangements, which leave room for the talents of a who's who of guest guitarists including Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, and Steve Lukather. Cocker's familiar growls and cracked crooning make the songs his own, as usual, and as usual he claims the

material without any sense of exclusivity. He never makes you forget the accomplished singers who did these songs before (sometimes more than one of them -- "I Keep Forgettin' [Every Time You're Near]" has had seemingly definitive readings by both Chuck Jackson and Michael McDonald, while "Jealous Guy" is associated not only with its author, John Lennon, but also Roxy Music's Bryan Ferry). Nor does he necessarily improve on those singers; could anyone turn in a more memorable version of "What's Going On" than Marvin Gaye? But that isn't really the point. It's not like his version of "With a Little Help From My Friends" was better than the Beatles', either. It was just different, and it made listeners hear the song in a different way. That's what an interpretive singer does, and it's what Cocker successfully does here, too. At a time when McDonald has enjoyed a career resurgence re-singing the Motown songbook, there is clearly a place for Cocker among adult listeners and on the adult contemporary charts, and that's why he's back on the majors. He does not disappoint. ---William Ruhlmann, Rovi

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