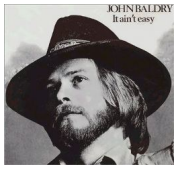
Long John Baldry - It Ain't Easy (1971)



01. Intro: Conditional Discharge (Ian Armitt/Long John Baldry) - 3:16 02. Don't Try To Lay No Boogie Woogie On The King Of Rock & Roll (Jeff Thomas) - 3:23 03. Black Girl (Huddie Ledbetter) - 2:48 04. It Ain't Easy (Ron Davies) - 4:49 05. Morning Morning (Tuli Kupferberg) - 2:37 06. I'm Ready (Willie Dixon) - 4:07 07. Let's Burn Down The Cornfield (Randy Newman) - 4:11 08. Mr. Rubin (Lesley Duncan) - 4:00 09. Rock Me When He's Gone (Elton John/Bernie Taupin) - 4:02 10. Flying (Ronnie Lane, Rod Stewart, Ron Wood) - 6:48 11. Going Down Slow (James B. Oden) - 3:07 12. Blues (Cornbread, Meat And Molasses) (Sonny Terry/Brownie McGhee) - 2:56 13. Love In Vain (Robert Johnson) - 4:17 14. Midnight Hour Blues (Leroy Carr) - 4:07 15. Black Girl (alternate take) (Huddie Ledbetter) - 3:31 16. It Ain't Easy (alternate take) (Ron Davies) - 5:07 17. I'm Ready (alternate take) (Willie Dixon) - 4:11 18. Radio Spot - 0:29
- Long John Baldry (John William Baldry) – vocals, 12-string guitar - Ian Armitt - piano (01-06) - Ron Wood - guitar (02,06), electric guitar (04), 12-string guitar (05) - Sam Mitchell - guitar (02,06), dobro steel guitar (03,04), 6-string guitar (05), slide guitar (06) - Alan Skidmore - tenor saxophone (02) - Rikki Brown - bass (02-06) - Mickie Waller - drums (02-06) - Ray Jackson - mandolin (03,05) - Maggie Bell - vocals (03,04) - Caleb Quaye - guitar (07,08,10), organ (09) - Joshuah M'Bopo - guitar (07,08,10) - Dave Glover - bass (07-10) - Roger Pope - drums (07-10) - Lesley Duncan, Madelene Bell, Doris Troy, Kay Garner, Liza Strike, Tony Burrows, Tony Hazzard, Roger Cook - chorus (02,09,10) - Elton John - piano (07-10), organ (10), producer (07-10) - Rod Stewart - producer (01-06)

It Ain't Easy features a British blues/rock lineup befitting the man behind the Long John Baldry moniker. This album returns Baldry to a decidedly edgier and hipper audience, with a literal cast of all-stars on some of the more adventurous material he had covered to date. This is no doubt due, at least in part, to the involvement of rock superstars Rod Stewart and Elton John. (In fact, John confesses to have taken the last name in his stage moniker from Baldry's first.) Among their contributions to the project, Stewart and Elton divided the production tasks -- each taking a side of the original album. Immediately, Baldry sheds the MOR blue-eyed pop soul image. The backing band on Stewart's side include fellow Face and future Rolling Stone, Ron Wood, on electric guitar and acoustic guitarist Sam Mitchell, who appeared on many of Stewart's early-'70s solo albums. His contributions to this side are numerous, including an especially

potent solo on Leadbelly's "Black Girl." This authentic duet featuring Maggie Bell on co-lead vocals is a definite return to the Mississippi Delta for the song which is also known as the bluegrass standard "In the Pines." Other highlights from Stewart's sector include the humorous and self-biographical leadoff track "Conditional Discharge," which is paired with the full-tilt boogie of "Don't Try to Lay No Boogie Woogie on the King of Rock & Roll." Arguably the oddest cover version on this album is also among the best; "Morning Morning" from head Fug Tuli Kupferberg is given new and surprisingly fresh life by Baldry. Highlights from Elton John's side include Randy Newman's "Let's Burn Down the Cornfield," which would have fit perfectly on John's Tumbleweed Connection album. Additionally, "Rock Me When He's Gone" was actually recorded by John, although his version remained unissued until the 1992 odds and sods compilation Rare Masters. --- Lindsay Planer, allmusic.com

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