Rita Chiarelli - Breakfast At Midnight (2001)

1 Woman in Blue 4:05 2 Horse of a Different Colour 4:57 3 Never Been Loved Before 3:55 4 Memphis Has Got the Blues 4:02 5 Midnight in Berlin 3:27 6 I Can Change For You 5:20 7 Since I've Had You On My Mind 4:31 8 Loving You (Is Killing Me) 4:30 9 If You Were Crying Over Me 4:16 10 Last Train 4:11 11 Eggs Over Easy 4:37
Personnel: Rita Chiarelli (vocals, acoustic guitar); John King (acoustic & electric guitars); Danny Greenspoon (acoustic guitar); Colin Linden (electric guitar, dobro); Kevin Breit (electric guitar, mandolin); Carlos Del Junco (harmonica); Richard Bell (accordion, piano, organ); Pat Kilbride, George Koller (bass); Al Cross (drums); Jackie Richardson, Shirley Richardson (background vocals).

Rita Chiarelli stands firmly behind her bid as a vocalist. Joining her for "Breakfast at Midnight" was a pleasant yet, I found, "low-cal" musical repast. Eleven cuts totaling 47:50 span a wide yard, covering obviously blues-flavored tunes, light rock, a bit of the folky, and even country flavors. There is no lack of fine musicianship; tasty licks and "tones of the learned" boast guitarist Colin Linden's journeyman style, and the rest of the players are very capable assets as well.

Rita is the songwriter, credited with the lyrics and music for all the works, a well-arranged batch not meant, however, for the "hot-blooded." "Woman in Blue" was a good choice to top the disc, (as it feints the nastiness that registers excitement to my ears at first); it comes on strongly. It does continue with a certain fervor; I simply prefer my milk with the cream still in the bottle, and my giblets fried instead of boiled. Familiar trademark phrases and chord patterns abound. "Horse of a Different Color" borrows the hook phrase from Bonnie Rice's "Mustang Sally," (a song very reminiscent of my work with Wilson Pickett- "ride, Sally, ride!") but produces a smooth, new, and artistic product. Cut 3, "Never Been Loved Before" is a light rumba laced with accordion, where Rita is joined in a singing duet with a male voice that, in my opinion, is a poor match for blend; a distraction in an otherwise nice tune. In "Memphis Has Got the Blues," I'm hit with a catchy musical phrasing..... a spin derived from Floyd Cramer's "Last Date" that is not

quite covert enough for these old ears. To summarize, the songs are good, but not terribly innovative; warm, but not on fire.

There is no doubt that Rita Chiarelli is a gifted singer and has golden lungs. I found her very effective in at least 3 different styles, which is a tribute to Rita's abilities, but not necessarily an asset in the effectiveness of the CD as a work. The album does leave me with a strong impression that if used to it's fullest, the lady and the voice COULD be a part of a simply "knock-out" sound. As for the promo info I received putting her on the same shelf as Bonnie Raitt..... well, that just may be a bit of an exaggeration, but if anyone deserves a nice word, it's Rita. --- Bobby Manriquez, mnblues.com

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