

## Betty LaVette - Interpretations - The British Rock Songbook (2010)

Written by bluesever

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01. *The Word* 02. *No Time To Live* 03. *Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood* 04. *All My Love*  
05. *Isn't It A Pity* 06. *Wish You Were Here* 07. *It Don't Come Easy* 08. *Maybe I'm Amazed*  
09. *Salt Of The Earth* 10. *Nights In White Satin* 11. *Why Does Love Got To Be So Bad* 12.  
*Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me* 13. *Love Reign O'er Me (Live)* Personnel: Bettye  
LaVette (vocals); Rob Mathes (acoustic guitar, electric guitar, keyboards, background vocals);  
Shane Fontayne (electric guitar); Aaron Heick (alto saxophone); Andy Snitzer (tenor  
saxophone); Jeff Kievit (trumpet); Mike Davis (trombone); Zev Katz (upright bass, electric  
bass); Charley Drayton (drums, percussion); James "D-Train" Williams, Tabitha Fair,  
Vaneese Thomas (background vocals).

At first glance, Bettye LaVette's 2010 album *Interpretations: The British Rock Songbook*, would appear to be just another collection of covers. But "interpretations" is the key word here, because LaVette, a Detroit soul veteran and a contemporary of more famous peers like Aretha Franklin and Smokey Robinson, is no run-of-the-mill singer, and she takes these classic British Invasion tracks and gives them new dimension, making them in every sense and nuance her own. That's not an easy task, since every one of these tracks is a well-known song, seemingly immutable in the original version, but amazingly, LaVette steals each and every one of them. John Lennon and Paul McCartney's "The Word," which leads things off, for instance, becomes the gospel stomper the Beatles always intended it to be, while Ringo Starr's "It Don't Come Easy" becomes a swampy, haunting, and profoundly wise blues song in LaVette's capable hands. And she's not afraid to make changes to these classics, either, updating the Rolling Stones' "Salt of the Earth" to include references to the HIV epidemic. She rearranges things in song after song here, moving choruses, swapping out verses, all in the name of claiming the song and placing it in new emotional territory. The idea for this album came after she performed the Who's "Love Reign O'Er Me" in 2008 at the Kennedy Center Honors ceremony for the band, and her version that night (it is included here as an extended bonus track) is nothing less than stunning, pulling a depth of emotion from the song that the Who could only dream of, as fine as the band's original version was. Now in her mid-sixties, LaVette is singing better than ever, and if she isn't a household name, she ought to be. This is a remarkable album because this lady is a remarkable singer -- that's the bottom line. ---Steve Leggett, Rovi

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