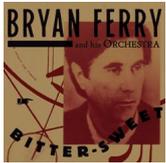


Bryan Ferry and His Orchestra - Bitter-Sweet (2018)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 24 January 2019 15:57 -

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01. *Alphaville* (02:54) 02. *Reason or Rhyme* (03:42) 03. *Sign of the Times (instr.)* (02:29)
04. *New Town* (03:57) 05. *Limbo (instr.)* (02:49) 06. *Bitter-Sweet* (03:57) 07. *Dance Away (instr.)* (02:47)
08. *Zamba* (03:05) 09. *Sea Breezes (instr.)* (03:01) 10. *While My Heart Is Still Beating* (03:11)
11. *Bitters End (instr.)* (02:26) 12. *Chance Meeting* (03:47) 13. *Boys and Girls* (04:40)
Accordion – Karen Street Cello – Katy Cox Double Bass – Chris Laurence, Sam Becker Harp – Camilla Pay Piano – Charlie Woof-Byrne Viola – Emma Owens, Sarah Chapman Violin – Emma Parker, Victoria Sutherland Vocals – Bobbie Gordon Bandoneon, Piano – Julian Rowlands Banjo, Guitar – Martin Wheatley Baritone Saxophone, Clarinet – Alan Barnes Drums – John Sutton Percussion – Frank Ricotti Piano, Harmonium – Colin Good Soprano Saxophone, Alto Saxophone, Bass Saxophone, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet – Richard White Tenor Saxophone, Clarinet – Robert Fowler Trombone – Ian Bateman, Malcolm Earle Smith Trumpet – Enrico Tomasso Tuba, Sousaphone – Marc Easener Viola, Violin – Marina Moore Violin, Viola – Ros Stephen

Building upon 2012's *The Jazz Age*, and his acting turn as a cabaret singer in the 1930s Netflix drama *Babylon Berlin*, Bryan Ferry returns to his love of urbane classic jazz with 2018's *Bitter-Sweet*. Recorded with longtime collaborator/pianist Colin Good, *Bitter-Sweet* finds the Roxy Music frontman once again embracing the vintage 1920s and '30s big-band swing he first explored on 1999's *As Time Goes By*, and which he and Good brought to fruition with *The Jazz Age*. However, whereas *The Jazz Age* featured instrumental reworkings of many of Ferry's best-loved songs, *Bitter-Sweet* features Ferry singing jazz versions of both Roxy Music songs and songs from his solo career. Featured on the album are the six songs the singer contributed to the *Babylon Berlin* soundtrack, including "Alphaville," "Reason or Rhyme," "Bitter-Sweet," "Dance Away," "Chance Meeting," and "Bitters End." As arranged by Good and Ferry, these are all wry and romantic productions that evoke the smoky ambiance of *Babylon Berlin*'s Weimar Republic-era setting. Elsewhere, Ferry transforms the new wave sophistication of "While My Heart Is Still Beating" off 1982's *Avalon* into a slinky, half-lidded crawl, and similarly mutates the pop exotica of his 1985 title track "Boys and Girls" into a slow-burn flamenco fever dream. Particularly compelling is Ferry and his orchestra's snappy rendition of "Sign of the Times" off 1978's *The Bride Stripped Bare*, in which the original track's driving guitar lines are transposed

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to a puckered trumpet lead. This is haunting jazz sprinkled with the golden dust of Ferry's glittery rock past. ---Matt Collar, AllMusic Review

Roxy Music frontman Bryan Ferry adds blues, jazz and swing instrumentation to some of his best-known work thus proving that he can innovate his stylings to a new era of music with his latest album 'Bitter-Sweet'.

The 13-track release - which includes eight vocal tracks - comes two years after 'The Jazz Age' which consisted entirely of instrumental recordings. The solo album, inspired by his work on Netflix series Babylon Berlin, is a "remake" of his past music which invokes a sense of nostalgia while managing to put a modern twist.

Starting off with the zig-zagging arrangement of violins, banjo and thumping wood blocks layered with Ferry's hushed vocals, is 'Alphaville'. Before moving into the haunting, echoey 'Reason Or Rhyme', a track that makes great use of tenor saxophones and muted trumpets. The track seamlessly blends into the upbeat instrumental 'Sign Of The Times' as another dance-worthy number takes over in the form of dreamy disco track 'Limbo', before slow-build 'New Town' leaves you with a sense of anticipation.

However, the stand-out track comes in the form of minimalist track 'Zamba' taken Ferry's 1987 solo album 'Bête Noire'. With spine-tingling synths and a soaring string section led by Ferry's hoarse whisper of a vocal, the track is something old, yet something completely new.

Other highlights include 'While My Heart Is Still Beating' from Roxy Music's swirling final studio album and 'Dance Away' which prompts you do as the name suggests with its flowing, light-hearted instrumentals.

While many of the tracks within the offering keep you listening on, the pace of the album seems to slow after 'Zamba', and you are tempted to skip ahead if you are not the biggest fan of jazz as some tracks such 'Bitters End' and 'Chance Meeting' don't make as much of an impact as

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the rest of the brilliant production.

Overall, the album – filled with as much theatrical swagger as great music- is much more than just a remake as Ferry's baritone vocals and inventive arrangements make for an album that invokes a lot more than nostalgia; with the ability to attract new fans as well as hold the old.

---Malvika Padin, clashmusic.com

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