

Joan Baez - Joan (1967)



01. *Be Not Too Hard* (Christopher Logue/Donovan Leitch) - 2:49
02. *Eleanor Rigby* (Paul McCartney/John Lennon) - 2:16
03. *Turquoise* (Donovan Leitch) - 3:15
04. *La Colombe - The Dove* (Jacques Brel/Alasdair Clayre) - 5:17
05. *Dangling Conversation* (Paul Simon) - 2:44
06. *The Lady Came From Baltimore* (Tim Hardin) - 2:30
07. *North* (Nina Dusheck/Joan Baez) - 2:48
08. *Children Of Darkness* (Richard Farina) - 3:51
09. *The Greenwood Side* (Traditional) - 7:43
10. *If You Were A Carpenter* (Tim Hardin) - 2:06
11. *Annabel Lee* (Edgar Allan Poe/Don Dilworth) - 4:56
12. *Saigon Bride* (Nina Dusheck/Joan Baez) - 3:12
13. *Oh, Had I A Golden Thread* (bonus) (Peter Seeger) - 3:43
14. *Autumn Leaves* (bonus) (Joseph Kozma/John H. Mercer/Jacques Andre M. Prevert) - 2:32

Personnel:

- Joan Baez - vocals, acoustic guitar
- Richard Romoff, Russ Savakus - bass
- Alvin Rogers - drums
- Bruce Langhorne – guitar

Joan was very much an album of its time in terms of its sound and production, more so than any other album that Joan Baez ever recorded. In 1967, rock, folk, folk-rock, and pop all seemed to be headed in new and ever-more-ornate directions, and Joan was a response to that change and, not coincidentally, is also the most self-consciously beautiful record that Baez ever cut. Arranger/conductor Peter Schickele, who had previously worked with Baez on her Christmas album, provides generally restrained orchestral accompaniment on ten of the 12 songs here.

The latter, in sharp contrast to Baez's earlier work, are mostly drawn from a wide range of such popular composers as John Lennon and Paul McCartney, Donovan, Paul Simon, and Jacques Brel, as well as Tim Hardin and Baez's late brother-in-law, Richard Farina. Several of these tracks -- "Turquoise" with its gorgeous parts for the harps and the horns, "Children of Darkness" with its beautiful writing for the reeds, and "Saigon Bride" with its haunting brass part -- are profoundly beautiful. Others, such as "Eleanor Rigby" and "Dangling Conversation," don't come off nearly as well, in part because they're competing against fairly ornate originals and also -- in the case of the Paul Simon song -- because of Baez's decision to alter the words. If Joan has one unfortunate attribute, it lies in the singer's Sinatra-like tendency to alter the lyrics of the songs that she's chosen to cover, if only by a single word ("is the theater really dead" becomes "is the church really dead," for no reason that anyone but the singer has ever been able to fathom); that and her overly strident singing (mated to an overly strident brass-laden arrangement) of Jacques Brel's "La Colombe" constitute the low point of this otherwise very fine album. Additionally, Baez shows off the two earliest-published products of her career as a songwriter, in the form of "North" and "Saigon Bride," the latter a particularly poignant anti-war song that expresses the futility of the Vietnam War about as well as anything this side of Phil Ochs' "White Boots Marching in a Yellow Land." ---Bruce Eder, allmusic.com

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