

Ben Harper – By My Side (2012)

Written by bluelover

Monday, 04 November 2019 15:57 -

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1 *Forever* 3:25 2 *By My Side* 3:35 3 *Gold To Me* 4:59 4 *Diamonds On The Inside* 4:25
5 *In The Colors* 3:01 6 *Beloved One* 3:59 7 *Not Fire Not Ice* 3:40 8 *Morning Yearning*
4:04 9 *Feel Love* 3:44 10 *Happy Everafter In Your Eyes* 2:25 11 *Waiting On An Angel* 3:54
12 *Crazy Amazing* 3:59 Bass – Juan Nelson, Matt Cory, Jesse Ingalls Cello – Suzie
Katayama, Timothy Loo Drums – Oliver Charles, Jordan Richardson Electric Guitar – Nicky P
Electric Piano – Greg Kurstin Guitar – Michael Ward, Jason Mozersky Keyboards – Jason
Yates Oboe, English Horn – Jon Clarke Organ [Hammond B3] – Ervin Pope Percussion –
Rock Deadrick, Leon Mobley Piano – Eric Sarafin Viola – Matthew Funes, Brett Banducci
Violin [First] – Joel Derouin, Alyssa Park Violin [Second] – Eve Butler, Patrick Rosalez Vocals,
Acoustic Guita, Slide Guitar [Weissenborn] – Ben Harper

The problem with many retrospectives is that they usually place an artist's best-known and/or best-selling songs in a sequence that can defy context. The end result can be a rather jagged listening experience. Ben Harper's *By My Side* seems to address that issue by looking at it directly. Instead of simply letting his label choose a slew of tracks and call it a "hits" or "best-of" collection, Harper handpicked a dozen cuts, and focused on a particular aspect of his work: ballads. In addition to ten standard-bearers from his catalog, he also chose an alternate studio version of "Not Fire Not Ice," which sounds like a nicely recorded demo (and was never available in the United States before), and provided a single new cut, a sparse, sexy, soulful number called "Crazy Amazing" with his Relentless7 bandmates. The remaining tracks are canny choices: the vast majority of them would be the very cuts his fans would choose for such a collection. They span his entire career beginning with "Forever," from *Welcome to the Cruel World*. Also included from that recording is "Waiting on an Angel" near the end of this set. The two tracks chosen from *Fight for Your Mind* are the title track, of course, and "Gold to Me." The title track to *Diamonds on the Inside* is also here. Among the other selections are "Morning Yearning" from *Lifeline* (with the Innocent Criminals), "Beloved One" from *Burn to Shine*, and "Happy Everafter in Your Eyes" from *Both Sides of the Gun*. Taking in Harper's ballads without the rockist guitar pyrotechnics is solid not only in conception but in execution. While there's no doubt that fans have most of these tracks already, listening to *By My Side*'s presentation of them as a resonant sampling of a particular area in the larger context of his work adds both

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depth and dimension to Harper's reputation, not only as a songwriter but as a singer as well.
---Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

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