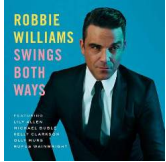


Robbie Williams - Swings Both Ways (2013)

Written by bluelover

Saturday, 30 November 2013 16:33 - Last Updated Tuesday, 13 June 2017 11:56

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01 – Shine My Shoes 02 – Go Gentle 03 – I Wan’na Be Like You 04 – Swing Supreme 05 – Swings Both Ways 06 – Dream A Little Dream 07 – Soda Pop 08 – Snowblind 09 – Puttin’ On The Ritz 10 – Little Green Apples 11 – Minnie The Moocher 12 – If I Only Had A Brain 13 – No One Likes A Fat Pop Star

It is a question worth asking, as Robbie nowadays finds himself in a career mid-life crisis. No longer a teen idol, and cast out into the wilderness by Radio 1, he yet remains far too flippant, subversive and generally interesting a figure to settle for a more mature/adult audience à la James Blunt or Michael Bublé.

As British pop's great prankster ponders this dilemma, he has taken a safe sideways step and gone back to the future. While his 2001 *Swing When You're Winning* album was regarded at the time as self-indulgent, its seven-times-platinum sales make it one of his biggest selling records to date. A belated follow-up swing album is thus pretty much a no-brainer.

Unlike the first album, *Swings Both Ways* also features original material among the Sinatra-style covers. Guy Chambers is now firmly back in Williams' fold, and *Shine My Shoes*, *Go Gentle* and the title track (a hyper-camp duet with a drawling Rufus Wainwright) are fun, sophisticated pop songs, if hardly likely to challenge the sales of *Angels* or *Let Me Entertain You*.

It's a Christmas album in all but name; hence the succession of star names dueting on hoary old standards. Robbie patently had fun in the studio larking through *Dream A Little Dream* with Lily Allen, *Little Green Apples* with Kelly Clarkson and the *Jungle Book's* *I Wanna Be Like You* with Olly Murs, even if the results could hardly be categorised as essential listening.

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The album closer, No One Likes A Fat Pop Star ("You just can't be portly this side of 40") shows that his mordant, self-mocking wit is safely intact, but Swings Both Ways is an album that teens will give to their aunties as a Christmas present, rather than vice versa – a fact that Robbie may like to ponder as he loiters at his career crossroads... ---lan Gittins, virginmedia.com

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