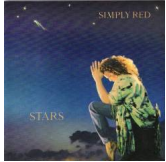


Simply Red – Stars (1991)

Written by bluelover

Tuesday, 13 October 2009 21:31 - Last Updated Friday, 28 July 2017 08:11

Simply Red – Stars (1991)



CD1

01. *Something Got Me Started* (4:01)
02. *Stars* (4:08)
03. *Thrill Me* (5:04)
04. *Your Mirror* (3:59)
05. *She's Got It Bad* (3:34)
06. *For Your Babies* (4:17)
07. *Model* (3:46)
08. *How Could I Fall* (3:52)
09. *Freedom* (3:50)
10. *Wonderland* (4:45)
11. *Come On In My Kitchen (Robert Johnson Sessions)* (1:33)
12. *Ramblin' On My Mind (Robert Johnson Sessions)* (2:11)
13. *Me And The Devil Blues (Robert Johnson Sessions)* (2:03)
14. *When You've Got A Good Friend* (1:59)
15. *Sad Old Red (Live In Hamburg 1992)* (5:56)
16. *More (Live In Hamburg 1992)* (4:14)
17. *Something Got Me Started (Live In Hamburg 1992)* (4:12)
18. *Thrill Me (Live In Hamburg 1992)* (5:09)
19. *Your Mirror (Live In Hamburg 1992)* (3:57)
20. *She's Got It Bad (Live In Hamburg 1992)* (3:45)

CD2

1. *Stars (Pm-ized Mix)* (4:11)
2. *For Your Babies (Edition Francais)* (4:06)
3. *Something Got Me Started (E-Smoove's Late Night Mix)* (8:01)
4. *Thrill Me (Steppin' Razor Mix)* (6:37)
5. *Freedom (Perfecto Mix)* (6:26)
6. *Stars (Comprende Mix)* (6:37)
7. *Something Got Me Started (Hurley's 7" Mix)* (3:56)
8. *Thrill Me (Connoisseurs Mix)* (5:56)
9. *Freedom (How Long Mix)* (4:10)
10. *Something Got Me Started (Perfecto Mix)* (5:09)
11. *Thrill Me (Nellee Hooper's Dub Mix)* (4:27)

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By the turn of the decade Simply Red were without doubt one of the UK's best known soul/R&B groups, with a string of top selling singles and three original long players that faithfully recreated black music from the 1960s and early 70s. Lead singer and front man Mick Hucknall had grown concerned that the band's sound was trapped in this era, and for the fourth album looked for something fresh and original that still maintained the vital link with the past. Having been impressed by Soul II Soul's "Club Classics Volume 1" album, particularly the snappy and highly influential rhythms, Hucknall contacted producer/DJ Nellee Hooper who suggested Japanese drummer/programmer Gota Yashiki. Gota's mix of organic and computer generated rhythms proved to be a masterstroke, making for a greater dance orientation and a more contemporary imprint on the recording. The indelibly positive results can be found on the superb opener, "Something Got Me Started", which combines the white hot rhythm with Fritz McIntyre's astutely rolling piano accompaniment.

Hucknall's other major decision was to ensure that every song was an original composition, further illustrating his wish to relinquish ties with the past. Stewart Levine's production effort is as ever polished, punchy on the dance numbers, smooth and considered when the tempo drops, never instrumentally confusing or upstaging the central feature which is of course Mick Hucknall's iconic vocal performance.

As Stuart Levine would say, "Great records are easy to make if you've got great songs to work with", and on the whole the simplicity in the sentiment is justified in much of the material on "Stars". This can be borne out by sales, as the album went on to be the biggest seller in the UK for 1991 and '92. The title track is a sparkling soul/pop single, with a beautifully harmonic multi tracked chorus. "Thrill Me" contains more of the intentional modern beats, and "For Your Babies" is a delicious ballad, partly inspired by the birth of a first child to manager Elliot Rashman. There are awkward missteps, particularly the tiresome dalliance with reggae ("Model"), and Hucknall's continued political rants aimed at the Government of the day ("Your Mirror" and "Wonderland"). It's hard to take seriously the opinions of a celebrity who spent much of his life not far from a cat walk in Milan, Paris or New York chasing young waifs.

Ultimately though, it's Hucknall's voice that stands out as an instrument of genuine warmth, sweet passion and perfect pitch. "Stars" combines this huge musical asset to the best set of songs he's ever delivered. ---Hackskeptic, hackskeptic.com

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