

Martha Wainwright - Come Home to Mama (2012)

Written by bluelover

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*1 I Am Sorry 2 Can You Believe It 3 Radio Star 4 Proserpina 5 Leave Behind
6 Four Black Sheep 7 Some People 8 I Wanna Make an Arrest 9 All Your Clothes
10 Everything Wrong*

The Wainwright-McGarrigles are the family that just keep giving. And given the mainstream appeal of brother Rufus' most recent album *Out of the Game* and this fourth album from Martha, they want to give to as many folk as possible.

Much has changed chez Martha in recent years – marriage, motherhood and the death of her mother Kate McGarrigle. The fury of her attention-seeking *Bloody Mother F***ing Asshole* ballad and the pain of the album *I Know You're Married But I've Got Feelings Too* have been moulded and tempered.

This process of growing up began on the 2009 live album *Sans Fusils, Ni Souliers, à Paris: Martha Wainwright's Piaf Record*, and now *Come Home to Mama*. The album is almost shockingly great. Martha's Piaf-like stab at emotional rollercoaster torch song is well documented, but not this level of subtlety and control.

This might well be down to working this time with another woman, Yuka C Honda (the instrumental half of New York-based Japanese duo *Cibo Matto*) instead of Wainwright's producer/husband Brad Albetta, whose programming/producing touch shapes the album's warm, intimate, expansive slopes.

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Come Home to Mama is not limited to any folk, torch or soul source, nor an overtly 1970s brief like *Out of the Game*; it sounds singularly out on its own, likewise Wainwright's voice. Even when she's emoting ecstatically on *Some People*, it doesn't resemble the protesting or sometimes exhausting figure of Martha's past.

Motherhood has a lot to answer for. It's not a direct musical comparison but, recorded after Elizabeth Fraser's first baby, Cocteau Twins' album *Heaven or Las Vegas* was bathed in a potent, golden glow, and that's how *Come Home to Mama* feels. The Fraser-like touches of *I Am Sorry* and *All Your Clothes* are perhaps incidental, and the Al Green mood of *Can You Believe It*, the slinky pop provocation of *Radio Star* and the torchy lullaby of *Proserpina*, written by her mother, are certainly far from ethereal la-la land.

This is more Laura Nyro, Barbra Streisand (hear *Leave Behind*), Phoebe Snow... or, rather, more Martha Wainwright. Who here has realised her best record to date. ---Martin Aston, BBC Review

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