David Bowie - The Next Day (2013)



01 – The Next Day [00:03:26] 02 – Dirty Boys [00:02:58] 03 – The Stars (Are Out Tonight) [00:03:57] 04 – Love Is Lost [00:03:57] 05 – Where Are We Now [00:04:09] 06 – Valentine's Day [00:03:02] 07 – If You Can See Me [00:03:12] 08 – I'd Rather Be High [00:03:45] 09 – Boss Of Me [00:04:09] 10 – Dancing Out In Space [00:03:21] 11 – How Does The Grass Grow [00:04:34] 12 – (You Will) Set the World On Fire [00:03:32] 13 – You Feel So Lonely You Could Die [00:04:37] 14 – Heat [00:04:25] Personnel: David Bowie - Vocals and Acoustic Guitar Gerry Leonard - Guitar David Torn - Guitar Tony Visconti – Guitar Earl Slick - Guitar Gail Ann Dorsey – Bass Tony Levin - Bass Zachary Alford – Drums Sterling Campbell - Drums & Tambourine Henry Hey – Piano Steve Elson - Baritone Sax and Contrabass Clarinet Antoine Silverman, Maxim Moston, Hiroko Taguchi, Anja Wood - Strings Tony Visconti - String Arrangement Gail Ann Dorsey and Janice Pendarvis - Backing Vocals

Even after 10 years away from the spotlight, David Bowie – pop's most important post-Beatles innovator – still commands unrivalled levels of fascination. Just when it seemed that he had quietly slipped into a dignified retirement, which no-one would have begrudged, the world awoke one morning in January to the remarkable news of not only a single, Where Are We Now?, available immediately, but also this album. In the context of the album, Where Are We Now? – a moving, backwards glance at The Berlin Years – seems a slight red herring. Bowie does consider the past, ageing, mortality: on the title track's chant of "My body left to rot in a hollow tree" and I'd Rather Be High's stumbling "to the graveyard".

How Does the Grass Grow? poses the question, "Would you still love me if the clocks could go backwards?" (You Will) Set the World on Fire seemingly addresses his pre-stardom self, a You Really Got Me riff and slick confidence reminding us that he's always had "what it takes". This elegiac nostalgia is matched by the beautiful You Feel So Lonely You Could Die. A complex mood pervades elsewhere, a sense of things gone awry. The nicely sinister Dirty Boys' expressive, serious vocal depicts a skewed Englishness of cricket bats, "Finchley Fair" and running "with dirty boys". The Stars (Are Out Tonight) sees those stars (a recurring theme) anthropomorphised: "sexless and unaroused", unsettlingly "beaming like blackened sunshine". The most experimental cut, If You Can See Me, proclaims – amidst spacey, tumbling rhythms and scattered jumbles of notes and words – "I will slaughter your kind". Love Is Lost makes

youth seem ominous – newness abounds but still “your fear is old”. Clearly this is no elder statesman simply wistfully gazing into a dappled, romanticised past. Valentine’s Day and I’d Rather Be High are further standouts – the former is a mid-paced depiction of a character with a “tiny face” and “scrawny hands”; the latter, a furious anti-war song. Closer Heat is a brilliant exemplar of what makes our finest, bravest musician of the past 40 years so irreplaceable. It’s full of spaced-out vocals, ominous noises and bangs, keening strings and disturbing, impressionistic poetry.

With the opacity and lack of easy answers that you would hope for from this most stylish and creative of artists, this is a triumphant, almost defiant, return. Innovative, dark, bold and creative, it’s an album only David Bowie could make. ---Jude Clarke, BBC Review

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