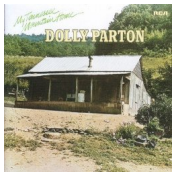
Dolly Parton – My Tennessee Mountain Home (1973)



01. The Letter - 2:01 02. I Remember - 3:40 03. Old Black Kettle - 2:30 04. Daddy's Working Boots - 2:51 05. Dr. Robert F. Thomas - 2:33 06. In The Good Old Days (When Times Were Bad) - 3:24 07. My Tennessee Mountain Home - 3:06 play 08. The Wrong Direction Home - 2:25 09. Back Home - 2:40
play
10. The Better Part Of Life - 3:11 11. Down On Music Row - 2:54 12. Sacred Memories - 2:41

Personnel: - Dolly Parton – lead female vocals, guitar - Jimmy Colvard, Jimmy Capps, Dave Kirby, Bobby Thompson, Chip Young – guitar - Pete Drake – pedal steel guitar - Don Warden – dobro - Bobby Dyson – bass - Jerry Carrigan – drums - Buck Trent – banjo - Mack Magah, Johnny Gimble – fiddle - Hargus "Pig" Robbins – piano - Charlie McCoy – harmonica - Mary Hoephinger – harp - The Nashville Edition - backing vocals

My Tennessee Mountain Home is one of the rootsiest records of Dolly Parton's career. With its affectionate homages and salutes to her childhood in Tennessee, the record is a direct and moving slice of mountain music that isn't dressed up in cosmopolitan production. Parton wrote every song on the record, creating a loose, musical autobiography with its 11 songs. Though the sound of the record isn't particularly rowdy, it is heartfelt and rootsy and Parton's songs -- "Old Black Kettle," "The Letter," "The Good Old Days When Times Were Bad," and "The Better Part of Life" -- are among her best, most affecting songs, much like My Tennessee Mountain Home itself. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, allmusic.com

Dolly Parton’s artistic breakthrough Coat of Many Colors may have been enveloped by a dark sense of sorrow, but sitting alongside her tales of bad relationships were hints that, as much as

she wanted to be a star in Nashville, she also longed for and missed the companionship of her family. Building upon this concept, she formulated My Tennessee Mountain Home, her 1973 endeavor. Although the set wasn't nearly as strong as Coat of Many Colors, it was an equally ambitious affair. In effect, Parton turned her homesickness into a full-fledged conceptual work that was filled with heartfelt reminiscences of her childhood. There were tributes to living a simple but happy life (Old Black Kettle), her father (Daddy's Working Boots), and even the doctor who brought her into the world (Dr. Robert F. Thomas). She also touched upon her initial struggles to break into the Nashville scene (Down on Music Row) and outlined the harsh challenges that threatened her family's survival (In the Good Old Days [When Times Were Bad]). Blinded by her longing for the past, there are moments on My Tennessee Mountain Home when Parton downplayed the difficulties that she and her family faced, though this was as much a result of her nostalgic loneliness as it was of her dignity and pride.

The real reason My Tennessee Mountain Home continues to miss the mark, however, has less to do with Parton's lyrics than it does with the music that surrounds them. The blend of rock, country, pop, and folk that was featured on Coat of Many Colors wasn't as well suited to My Tennessee Mountain Home's songs. Instead of updating the Appalachian-bred folk of the Carter Family and the Louvin Brothers, Parton would have been better served by completely embracing the unvarnished mountain music of her youth. Then again, if she had followed this strategy, she never would have taken the crucial steps that landed My Tennessee Mountain Home's title track at #15 on the country charts. Although commercial success later became the force that drove her — and considerably undermined many of her later outings — here, it's barely a distraction. The addition of Sacred Memories to the recently reissued version of My Tennessee Mountain Home further enhances the aura that Parton was trying to create, and the sources of her strength — her family and her spirituality — never were made more apparent.
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