

A *FolkWax* Reprint

This review originally ran in FolkWax on Oct 13, 2005

Rosanne Cash

The Very Best of Rosanne Cash

FolkWax Rating: 10 out of 10

An Inspired Collection, (10/12/05)

Greatest hits and best of packages pose an interesting challenge for both artist and listener: what can one learn, what may one offer, that is at the same time true to the spirit of the artist and the time the works were created and yet adds something to that work? Rosanne Cash and compilation producer Jerry Rappaport have chosen a subtle way to handle this by using sequencing, selection, and juxtaposition. Most of Cash's recorded work, certainly that which deserves to end up on best of collection, asks more questions than it answers.

Opening with "The Wheel," the title cut from one of the artist's more introspective offerings sets that scene. Classic Cash radio hits are here, including "Seven Year Ache," "I Don't Know Why You Don't Want Me," and "This is the Way We Make a Broken Heart," which among other things, serve to remind what a fine and focused singer Cash is, a fact that's occasionally left behind in discussion of her lyrical choices. The four-song stretch of "Hold On," "On the Surface," "No Memories Hangin' Around," and "My Baby Thinks He's a Train" could form the autobiography of almost any serious relationship at one time or another. Taking another sort of relationship in view, it almost seems wrong to call "September When It Comes" a duet. It is more of a conversation between Cash and her father Johnny, recorded at a time when both were coming to terms with the knowledge that he was nearing the end of his life. A spare and intimate take on another consideration of uncertainty, "Western Wall," resonates with that.

Then Cash offers a different sort of tribute to her father with her high energy, good fun, and good music take on "Tennessee Flat Top Box," from her groundbreaking album King's Record Shop, which paved the way for many current Country singer-songwriters. The fifteen-song collection closes with two songs that Cash makes the more intense by her quietly reflective performance, "What We Really Want" and "Seventh Avenue." About half the cuts were produced by Rodney Crowell and half by Jon Leventhal with each giving inspired attention to the singer and the song, at the service of the music. Those who know Cash's music and those to whom it is new will both want to listen to this project more than once, and will learn by doing so.

Kerry Dexter is a senior contributing editor at FolkWax

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