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CD Review

USA - GARY US BONDS: Back In 20

M.C. Records. 12 tracks. 42 mins.

In case you were wondering the 20 in the title is years not minutes. The album is so-called because this is the first studio album from Gary US Bonds in two decades. Two thoughts leap to mind, what a shame it took so long and what a comeback. Mind you, if you're looking to reintroduce yourself then you could do a lot worse than enlist the talents of Southside Johnny, Bruce Springsteen, Allman Brothers guitarist Dickey Betts and Phoebe Snow. Springsteen is a long time admirer of Bonds, writing and producing 'This little Girl Is Mine', 'Out of Work' and 'Daddy's Come Home', songs which helped re-launch (what, again?) Bonds' career in the 80s. Here's a tip for you Gary, don't go away this time. In a cynical world, the suspicion is always that here we go again. Another singer down on his luck gets back on the gravy train and releases the superannuating CD, with heartfelt protestations that 'this is the one I've waited a lifetime to make'. Well the unstoppable rush of 'Can't Teach An Old Dog New Tricks' would melt even the hardest of hearts. Quite why you'd want to teach this particular 'old dog' any tricks old or new is baffling, just leave him be, he's doing fine. It would be easy to think that it's the towering presence of Springsteen lurking over Bonds' shoulder, or the breakneck harmonica of Southside Johnny that drives him on. But Bonds hits his peak early on and stays there for the duration. The Boss and Southside may just be hanging on his coat tails. With his longtime touring band The Roadhouse Rockers in tow. Bonds has captured the vitality and zest of live performances that have seen him labelled one of the premier 'party singers' of all time. It would surely be impossible not to have a good time at one of his gigs no matter how hard you tried. After an opening that continues with 'Murder In The First Degree' and 'Take Me Back' there's a natural expectation of a lull in the storm but Bonds uses those three as a launchpad into the kind of blues rock that you need to be fighting fit just to listen to. There's an electricity about songs like 'She Just Wants To Dance', while Fannie Mae sees Bonds rival the great James Brown in ratcheting the emotional tension ever higher. Showmanship? Sure but all backed up by Bonds natural talent and a few friends.....Michael Mee