

Odetta - Odetta Sings Folk Songs (1963)

Written by bluesever

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1. 900 Miles 3:10 2. Blowing In The Wind 4:09 3. Maybe She Go 1:54 4. I Never Will Marry 1:55 5. Yes I See 2:52 6. Why Oh Why 2:05 7. Senandoah 3:46 8. The Golden Vanity 4:02 9. Roberta 3:07 10. Anthem Of The Rainbow 4:07 11. All My Trials 3:32 12. This Little Light Of Mine 3:03 Odetta – vocals, guitar

From 1965, Odetta Sings Dylan was one of the first albums entirely devoted to Bob Dylan interpretations, and one of the best. In part that's because the concept was still actually fresh then; in fact, other than an obscure 1964 album by Linda Mason, it was the very first album of Dylan covers. And in part it was because, unlike most of the artists who would take a swing at the concept, Odetta was actually a major folk musician, one who had done much to inspire Dylan himself. But most of all, it was because the arrangements were excellent, featuring the guitar of Bruce Langhorne (who, of course, played on Dylan's Bringing It All Back Home and numerous 1960s folk and folk-rock recordings) and, one presumes, the bass of frequent accompanist Bill Lee (though the CD doesn't list session credits). Langhorne, the character who inspired "Mr. Tambourine Man," also plays some tambourine, particularly on "Baby, I'm in the Mood for You." Although this is not a folk-rock album, as a result the arrangements have far more rhythm, swing, and imagination than most folk records of the era did. The song choices are good, too, not only including familiar tunes like "The Times They Are A-Changin'" and "Mr. Tambourine Man," but also some songs that hardly anyone has recorded. Indeed, Dylan never did put "Long Ago, Far Away" or "Long Time Gone" on any of his official releases, and didn't release three of the other songs ("Baby, I'm in the Mood for You," "Walkin' Down the Line," and "Tomorrow Is a Long Time") in the 1960s. All of this is not to overlook Odetta's well-nuanced, bluesy vocal interpretations of the material, particularly on an extraordinary ten-minute version of "Mr. Tambourine Man." The 2000 CD reissue on Camden adds "Blowin' in the Wind" (from a 1963 album) and "Paths of Victory" (from a 1964 LP) as bonus tracks, nice additions that are stylistically consistent with the rest of the recording. ---Richie Unterberger, Rovi

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