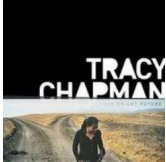


Tracy Chapman – Our Bright Future (2008)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 30 October 2009 12:24 - Last Updated Monday, 15 July 2013 12:46

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1 *Sing For You* 2 *I Did It All* 3 *Save Us All* 4 *Our Bright Future* 5 *For A Dream* 6 *Thinking Of You* 7 *A Theory* 8 *Conditional* 9 *Something To See (No War)* 10 *The First Person On Earth* 11 *Spring* Musicians: Tracy Chapman – acoustic and electric guitar, vocals Larry Goldings – keyboards Steve Gadd – drums Joe Gore – acoustic and electric guitar, keyboards Larry Klein – bass, organ Dean Parks – guitar, clarinet, mandolin, pedal steel Joey Waronker – drums, percussion Rock Deadrick – background vocals Carla Kihlstedt – violin, nyckelharpa Michael Webster – keyboards Rob Burger – keyboards

For Tracy Chapman, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Twenty years after her self-titled debut made her an unexpected overnight star, Chapman's music has changed remarkably little, and while it would be unfair to say she's revealed no stylistic growth since her first album, two decades on she's still following a remarkably similar path, offering well-crafted, midtempo acoustic-oriented songs rooted deep in issues of social justice and matters of the heart on her eighth album, *Our Bright Future*. Produced by Larry Klein, best known for his work with Joni Mitchell, *Our Bright Future* doesn't sound retro quite so much as it seems to have appeared by magic from some time warp linking Chapman to the early '70s, complete with Steve Gadd delivering supremely tasteful drumming and Dean Parks doing the same on guitar. With the exception of the sly "I Did It All," in which Chapman assumes the voice of some wild-child celebrity celebrating her paparazzi-worthy exploits, *Our Bright Future* covers the thematic territory you'd expect from Chapman -- the universality of faith against the factionalism of religion ("Save Us All"), the folly of war ("Our Bright Future"), the struggle to overcome cynicism in a culture gone wrong ("Thinking of You"), the longing for a better world ("Something to See"), and the sweet solace of love ("A Theory"). Chapman's songs are both heartfelt and literate, as they've always been, and the production and arrangements are free of clutter, allowing her subtle but passionate vocals to take the center stage without strain. The craft of *Our Bright Future* is impressive and Chapman's talents are as clearly evident as ever, but unfortunately this album offers precious little in the way of anything fresh or unexpected from this artist. There's a fine line between doing what you do best and simply following formula, and *Our Bright Future* finds Chapman leaning too far towards the bad side of that equation for her

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own good. ---Mark Deming

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