

Smokie - Bright Lights & Back Alleys (1977)

Written by bluelover

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01. *It's Your Life* (N.Chinn/M.Chapman) - 3:33
02. *I Can't Stay Here Tonight* (C.Norman/P.Spencer) - 4:05
03. *Sunshine Avenue* (C.Norman/P.Spencer) - 3:09
04. *Think Of Me* (C.Norman/P.Spencer) - 4:41
05. *In The Heat Of The Night* (N.Chinn/M.Chapman) - 4:45
06. *Needles And Pins* (J.Nitzschy/S.Bono) - 2:42
07. *No One Could Ever Love You More* (C.Norman/P.Spencer) - 2:30
08. *The Dancer* (L.Sayer/D.Courtney) - 3:50
09. *Baby It's You* (C.Norman/P.Spencer) - 3:49
10. *Walk Right Back* (C.Norman/P.Spencer) - 5:29

Personnel:

- Chris Norman - lead vocals, rhythm guitar
- Alan Silson - lead guitar, vocals
- Terry Uttley - bass, vocals
- Pete Spencer – drums

On their fourth album, Smokie attempt to broaden their country-flavored pop with a few stylistic experiments. The resulting album is successful for the most part. For instance, their European hit "It's Your Life" effectively marries the group's sweet harmonies to a reggae-styled pop melody, and further spices things up by throwing in a surprising Beatles-styled midsection. Another song with a Beatlesque feel is "Sunshine Avenue," a full-on tribute to the Fab Four's psychedelic era that mimics the group's sonic affections from that time (electronically filtered vocals, stately horns, and a rollicking pop melody) and even name-checks Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. However, the biggest surprise in the experimental vein is "In the Heat of the Night," a gritty midtempo rocker that effectively pits a muscular, guitar-heavy performance from the band with a sweeping, cinematic string arrangement to create a convincing tale of life on the mean streets of the city. In fact, this song was so strong that producer Mike Chapman later

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revived it as the title track for Pat Benatar's 1979 debut album. Bright Lights and Back Alleys also features an impressive, punchy cover of the pop classic "Needles and Pins" done in the traditional, acoustic-flavored Smokie style. A few weak tracks occasionally weigh the album down (example: "Walk Right Back" is a dull boogie-style rocker that feels like filler), but Bright Lights and Back Alleys is an overall solid album that offers plenty of worthwhile tracks to entertain Smokie's fans. ---Donald A. Guarisco, AllMusic Review

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