

Aretha Franklin - Hey Now Hey (The Other Side of the Sky) [1973]

Written by bluelover

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Aretha Franklin - Hey Now Hey (The Other Side of the Sky) (1973)



01. *Hey Now Hey (The Other Side Of The Sky) (Aretha Franklin) - 4:40*
 02. *Somewhere (Leonard Bernstein/Stephen Sondheim) - 6:14*
 03. *So Swell When You're Well (Aretha Franklin) - 4:13*
 04. *Angel (Carolyn Franklin/Sonny Saunders) - 4:25*
 05. *Sister From Texas (Aretha Franklin) - 3:09*
 06. *Mister Spain (Carolyn Plummer) - 6:40*
 07. *That's The Way I Feel About Cha (Bobby Womack/Joe Hicks/John Grisby) - 7:03*
 08. *Moody's Mood (James Moody) - 2:56*
 09. *Just Right Tonight (Avery Parrish/Buddy Feyne/Robert Bruce/Quincy Jones/Aretha Franklin) - 7:42*
- Bonus:*
10. *Master Of Eyes (The Deepness Of Your Eyes) (Aretha Franklin/Bernice Hart) - 3:23*

Personnel:

- Aretha Franklin - vocals, piano (02,03)
- Phil Woods - alto sax (02)
- Joe Farrell - tenor sax (04), flute (06)
- Billy Preston - piano (09)
- Willie Bridges, Charles Chalmers, Andrew Love, Floyd Newman - saxophone
- Wayne Jackson - trumpet
- Tommy Cogbill, Jerry Jemmott - bass
- Roger Hawkins - drums
- Jimmy Johnson - guitar
- Spooner Oldham – keyboards

"Hey Now Hey (The Other Side Of The Sky)" may be the most misunderstood Aretha Franklin album of all time. Panned by critics for its eclecticism and lack of focus, HNH was produced by Quincy Jones and Aretha's first album for Atlantic that was not produced by Jerry Wexler.

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Coming off a string of ten outstanding Wexler-produced albums - "I Never Loved A Man" and "Lady Soul" were what you would call landmark albums - HNH was a bit of a disappointment. The concept of marrying Aretha's deep soul with Quincy's musical genius may have worked on paper, but the execution fell short for reasons that had nothing to do with Aretha. Vocally, she was in peak form and obviously still delivering. The clue to HNH's shortcomings may be found in David Nathan's excellent sleeve notes. It appears that HNH was originally conceived as an all-out jazz experiment for Aretha with Quincy producing at the helm but when Atlantic lost its nerve midway through the project and decided to include some more pop/soul oriented material in the album to avert the risk of potential commercial disaster, that's when the problems started. It's a shame, because cut for cut, the album is with a few exceptions difficult to fault. Collectively, the pop/soul oriented tracks are neither better nor worse than the jazz ones, just different.

HNH is worth buying just for "Angel" alone. Composed by her sister Carolyn, "Angel" is possibly the most beautiful ballad Aretha has ever recorded in her entire career. Another highlight is the Esther Phillips' inspired "Sister From Texas", a percussively cooking and bluesy soul number given a full workout treatment by Aretha. The title track is also mysterious and interesting. Using an unusual two coda song structure, there is even a hint of 70s drugs culture ("on the other side of the sky") in the lyrics and it works. "So Swell When You're Well" chugs along nicely but is unexceptional. "Mister Spain" has a moody charm about it, but "That's How I Feel About 'Cha" is a mess. Not much of a song in the first place, it is little more than an excuse for Aretha to show off while practicing her scales. The album's grand opus, Bernstein/Sondheim's "Somewhere", given a jazzy treatment with piano breaks mid-song is an inventive if not altogether successful arrangement. The producer/arranger may have gone overboard on that one.

The two pure jazz tracks which close HNH (ie, not counting the excellent "Master Of Eyes" which is included as a bonus track) is impressive for Aretha's amazing vocalising but otherwise belong elsewhere with the other completed jazz tracks still sitting in Atlantic's vault.

So, what started out as a jazz album ended up only one quarter a jazz album, half a conventional pop/soul album and a quarter of a fusion album. Blame it on Atlantic if you must for the mishmash and occasional misstep but Aretha vocally more than measures up against her glorious legacy preceding this most misunderstood release. Me ? I love it. ---amazon.com

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