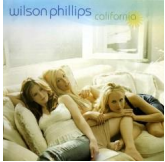


Wilson Phillips ☐ – California (2004)

Written by bluelover

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1 *You're No Good (Vocals – Linda Ronstadt)* 2 *Old Man* 3 *California* 4 *Already Gone*
5 *Go Your Own Way* 6 *Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There Is A Season)* 7 *Monday Monday* 8 *Get Together* 9 *Doctor My Eyes* 10 *Dance Dance Dance* 11 *In My Room (Vocals – Brian Wilson)* Wilson Phillips: Carnie Wilson, Chynna Phillips, Wendy Wilson

The members of Wilson Phillips have been through a lot in the 12 years since their last record came out: marriages, kids, solo albums, televised operations, and talk shows. Add to that the fact that the band pretty much broke up in 1993, and it is no surprise it took so long. *California* is a concept album of sorts. All the songs are about California, or were recorded by quintessential California bands. The girls' voices sound better than ever, full of verve and California soul. Carnie, Wendy, and Chynna each take two leads; the rest of the songs are group vocals. Part of the fun of *California* is hearing the girls tackle songs that their respective parents recorded 30-plus years earlier. Chynna turns "Monday Monday" into a charging rocker with none of the introspection of the original; it sounds like a Go-Go's song if they had ever recorded with a full orchestra. The two Beach Boys songs are handled in very different ways. "Dance Dance Dance" is a tight rocker with loads of energy and some excellent farfisa work by Roger Joseph Manning Jr.; "In My Room" features Brian Wilson on piano and vocals and, unsurprisingly, has the best harmony vocals on the album. It may even bring a lump to your throat at the end when Brian exclaims loudly, "That sounds great! I love your sound!!" and Carnie and Wendy Wilson sound truly moved in response. Knowing all they have been through, it kinda gets you right there. The song is very simple and moving, and points to a problem the rest of the record has, namely a bloodless, sterile feel that comes from the slick production and overly safe sound. The songs that work the best are the simplest, like "Monday Monday," the driving "Doctor My Eyes," and the very moody and restrained "Go Your Own Way." Too often, however, the songs are sunk by overcooked arrangements. Producer Peter Asher goes for an ultramodern processed sound that makes it sound like the girls are merely singing updated karaoke versions of the old hits. The cover of Linda Ronstadt's version of "You're No Good" is the worst offender with its very cheesy synth drums and the shredding guitar sounds. "Turn! Turn! Turn!" follows close behind due to the very ill-conceived techno flourishes and drum programming. Apart from the orchestral strings which add nice coloring here and there, the sounds on the album are very

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predictable and uninspired, which is really too bad because the girls sound very committed and inspired. The choice of songs doesn't help create much excitement either. The liner notes even make reference to how safe the selections are by asking the whereabouts of songs by Harry Nilsson, Warren Zevon, the Turtles, Love, Johnny Rivers, or the Merry-Go-Round. Now, no one in his right mind comes to a Wilson Phillips album expecting them to cover Arthur Lee or Emitt Rhodes songs, but they could have strayed farther afield. That being said, this is still a very pleasant album by three very good vocalists. That it could have been better doesn't detract from the fact that Wilson Phillips fans will be overjoyed at the return of the band. Fans of modern pop that isn't totally faceless and vacuous might like it, too. ---Tim Sendra, AllMusic Review

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