

Lou Reed - Berlin (1973)

Written by bluesever

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Side one 1. "Berlin" – 3:23 2. "Lady Day" – 3:40 3. "Men of Good Fortune" – 4:37 4. "Caroline Says I" – 3:57 5. "How Do You Think It Feels" – 3:42 6. "Oh, Jim" – 5:13

Side two

1. "Caroline Says II" – 4:10 2. "The Kids" – 7:55 3. "The Bed" – 5:51 4. "Sad Song" – 6:55

Personnel: Lou Reed – vocals, acoustic guitar Bob Ezrin – piano, mellotron, production, arrangement Michael Brecker – tenor sax Randy Brecker – trumpet Jack Bruce – bass; except "Lady Day" & "The Kids" Aynsley Dunbar – drums; except "Lady Day" & "The Kids" Steve Hunter – electric guitar Tony Levin – bass on "The Kids" Allan Macmillan – piano on "Berlin" Gene Martynec – acoustic guitar, synthesizer and vocal arrangement on "The Bed," bass on "Lady Day" Jon Pierson – bass trombone Dick Wagner – background vocals & electric guitar Blue Weaver – piano on "Men of Good Fortune" B.J. Wilson – drums on "Lady Day" & "The Kids" Steve Winwood – organ & harmonium Steve Hyden, Elizabeth March, Lou Reed, Dick Wagner – choir

Transformer and "Walk on the Wild Side" were both major hits in 1972, to the surprise of both Lou Reed and the music industry, and with Reed suddenly a hot commodity, he used his newly won clout to make the most ambitious album of his career, Berlin. Berlin was the musical equivalent of a drug-addled kid set loose in a candy store; the album's songs, which form a loose story line about a doomed romance between two chemically fueled bohemians, were fleshed out with a huge, boomy production (Bob Ezrin at his most grandiose) and arrangements overloaded with guitars, keyboards, horns, strings, and any other kitchen sink that was handy (the session band included Jack Bruce, Steve Winwood, Aynsley Dunbar, and Tony Levin). And while Reed had often been accused of focusing on the dark side of life, he and Ezrin approached Berlin as their opportunity to make The Most Depressing Album of All Time, and they hardly missed a trick. This all seemed a bit much for an artist who made such superb use of the two-guitars/bass/drums lineup with the Velvet Underground, especially since Reed doesn't even play electric guitar on the album; the sheer size of Berlin ultimately overpowers both Reed and his material. But if Berlin is largely a failure of ambition, that sets it apart from the vast majority of Reed's lesser works; Lou's vocals are both precise and impassioned, and

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though a few of the songs are little more than sketches, the best -- "How Do You Think It Feels," "Oh, Jim," "The Kids," and "Sad Song" -- are powerful, bitter stuff. It's hard not to be impressed by Berlin, given the sheer scope of the project, but while it earns an A for effort, the actual execution merits more of a B-. ---Mark Deming, allmusic.com

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