

Bon Jovi - What About Now (Deluxe Edition) (2013)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 14 July 2016 12:44 - Last Updated Saturday, 25 November 2017 21:54

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*01 Because We Can 02 I'm With You 03 What About Now 04 Pictures Of You 05 Amen
06 That's What The Water Made Me 07 What's Left Of Me 08 Army Of One 09 Thick As
Thieves 10 Beautiful World 11 Room At The End Of The World 12 The Fighter 13 With These
Two Hands 14 Not Running Anymore 15 Old Habits Die Hard 16 Every Road Leads Home To
You* Jon Bon Jovi – lead vocals, guitar Richie Sambora – guitar, backing vocals Hugh
McDonald – bass, backing vocals Tico Torres – drums David Bryan – keyboards, backing
vocals + David Campbell – string arranger & conductor

One of the great unheralded midlife crises of rock & roll belongs to Jon Bon Jovi, who decided sometime around the turn of the millennium that he wasn't being taken seriously, so it was time to make music that mattered. He wound up taking detours after 2002's *Bounce*, the album that inaugurated this phase -- and, it has to be said, that 2007 country detour *Lost Highway* was both his best and biggest record of the decade -- but as he crept closer to 50, the music of Bon Jovi got increasingly somber. *What About Now*, following a long four years after 2009's *The Circle*, continues down this sober path, as the group splices elements of U2, contemporary country, Coldplay, finger-plucked folk, and, yes, Bruce Springsteen into a monochromatic dirge. Aesthetically, this is a veritable reiteration of *The Circle*, where Bon Jovi spent much of their time playing big songs about big topics. As Jon Bon Jovi ponders the state of the union in 2013 (he raises the question "What About Now," then proceeds to answer it throughout the album), he repeats images -- faith intermingles with the military, although rarely in a way that suggests his politics lean to the right; rather, they're just underscoring the troubles within the American heartland -- as he cites but never explores the big issues of a changing world. He laments the passing of CBGB, but the sound is all dusky Auto-Tuned arena rock, powerful in its attack but colorless in its texture. Also, there aren't so many big hooks on *What About Now* -- just the raise-your-fist anthem of "Because We Can," with most of the sweetest melodies coming from the softer, quieter moments, such as the acoustic "The Fighter," which may (or may not) contain elliptical references to Simon & Garfunkel's "The Boxer." What ties all these songs together is Bon Jovi's adamant refusal to rely on anything that comes easily to the band. For that, you have to turn to the nice adult contemporary pop of "Into the Echo," a bonus track on deluxe editions of the album. On the proper *What About Now*, the group is striving to sound big and important

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yet winds up sounding small. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, Rovi

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