

James Blunt - Moon Landing [Apollo Edition] (2014)

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1. *Smoke Signals* 2. *When I Find Love Again* 3. *Face The Sun* 4. *Satellites* 5. *Bonfire Heart* 6. *Heart To Heart* 7. *Miss America* 8. *The Only One* 9. *Sun On Sunday* 10. *Bones* 11. *Always Hate Me* 12. *Postcards* 13. *Blue On Blue* 14. *Telephone* 15. *Kiss This Love Goodbye* 16. *Hollywood* 17. *Breathe* 18. *Trail Of Broken Hearts* 19. *Working It Out* James Blunt – Vocals, Acoustic Guitar, Piano, Synthesizer [Moog], Ukulele James Bryan, Matt Chait – Guitar Martin Terefe, Sasha Kristov – Bass Glen Scott – Keyboards Mike Armstrong – Strings Karl Brazil – Drums

James Blunt may never live down the success of his first single, "You're Beautiful." It made him a star in 2004 yet it also pegged him as the kind of sad-sack singer/songwriter beloved of doctors' offices the world over, which may be enough to sustain a living but not a career. Blunt is savvy enough to realize this and he started to broaden and enliven his craft fairly quickly, abandoning the slow-footed ballads of *Back to Bedlam* for a richly textured pop that eventually gained some semblance of color by the time *Some Kind of Trouble* rolled around in 2010. Three years later, *Moon Landing* arrived and although its title suggest some kind of spectral scope, it's not quite as lively as its predecessor, preferring the exquisitely textured adult contemporary pop of Dido, but giving those intricately produced ballads insistent melodies and rhythms. Sometimes, Blunt's phrasing can lapse into solipsistic moans -- this is especially true when the electronics are stripped away and the tempos slow -- but when everything is relatively sprightly, the feel is surprisingly appealing, even though Blunt can't help but piggyback on styles that are a guaranteed rocket to the Top 40. This is most evident on "Bonfire Heart," a Ryan Tedder collaboration that pounds and stomps in the style of the Lumineers, and there are echoes of Maroon 5 in the octave jumps of "Always Hate Me," but these pandering lapses -- accentuated by an unnecessary tribute to Whitney Houston called "Miss America" -- do not detract from an album that is, by many measures, Blunt's richest and best collection to date. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, Rovi

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