



Over my lifetime I've been partially raised by cinema. It's safe to say that in my heart every cherished moment seems to flow side by side with a soundtrack of themes and scattered instrumentals from here and there. That being said, when I first listened to LaVon Hardison's third album, *Come Together*, I was reserved. Decidedly so until possibly the fourth or fifth time around. Memories of watching *Annie* as a kid, a feel good moment from Stephen Chow's *CJ7*, DeNiro's directorial debut in *A Bronx Tale*. The songs from each and within this album gradually rotated towards a new found love for both.

The opening track is *Tomorrow*. Hardison immediately makes the track her own mixing a jovial backing soundtrack filled with flute, a pulsing bass line and a whimsical drum mix with a heartfelt delivery that ends on a scat note. The track offers up homage while splashing it with a sophistication that truly makes room for this matured version among its more youthful version.

Sunny is track 2 off the album which is closer to the Bobby Hebb version than I'm used to so it took me a minute to find my footing. Instead of an upbeat, almost disco like version (the one I'm constantly hearing in films) Hardison comes at the track just a bit more undertone than even the original. Her voice is smoky across a smooth R&B tone that's mixed with easy Jazz piano that places it in a darkened club of anywhere.

Come Together, the fourth track off the album, really took me a minute to absolutely fall in love with. It's tough tackling an outfit as larger than life as The Beatles, but by the third time around with the album I didn't love the original any less but I most certainly loved this newer version just as much. The drums, the piano, Hardison's unwavering voice. Just, wow.

I found myself oddly enough loving, without having to come to terms, with *Alfie*, the fifth song on the album. Even though I had heard and loved the Dionne Warwick version from the 1966 version of the titular film and the 2004 Joss Stone version from the remake, Hardison sings it as if it were one of her own originals. The lounge Jazz style of the backing music isn't exactly Sonny Rollins, but it doesn't need to be. Well worth adding to a collection of bests in regards to the tune.

As strange as this is going to sound, when I first listened to Hardison sing *Better Than Anything I* immediately thought about a DVD I had bought for my kids when they were just babies called *Stories to Remember: Rhymin Time*. The DVD had Phylicia Rashad (*The Cosby Show*) singing nursery rhymes and fairy tales and I just couldn't break the strange connection. It's a great track for sure, but it hit me personally.

The kids (no longer babies) and I laughed and sang along to parts of *(They Long To Be) Close To You* as it was a song featured in the Penelope Spheeris' 2004 *Little Rascals* film. It was great being able to connect with them and share some Jazz music with them, a feat accomplished many times with the album.

Cover albums like this are great jumping off points for anyone looking to get into Jazz music without going full bore and trying to understand the kaleidoscope of sounds the genre sometimes has to offer. If you're like me, a film lover and soundtrack fan, you're going to find yourself connecting with the album easily. If you're not, Hardison and company offer up a potpourri of styles on the album that should grab your attention and bring you in from start to finish. Very much worth checking out. Enjoy.

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