

BRIAN WILSON REIMAGINES GERSHWIN by John Etherington (402 words)

Hearing The Beach Boys' 67-year old founder sing *I Loves You Porgy* seems initially rather odd, but then "oddness" is something in which Brian Wilson specialises. He has often cited Gershwin as an influence; hence this tribute from a living musical genius to an earlier one, and it's perhaps the first time that many of us post-war kids have taken Gershwin on board, even if we know that he wrote classics such as *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Summertime* and ... um...lots of others.

An excerpt from "*Rhapsody*" with Brian and band harmonising opens the album before lush orchestration transplants us to a cosy 1930s setting with *The Like in I Love You*; one of two unfinished Gershwin numbers recently completed by Wilson. Lines such as "the muse in music, the pain in painting..." bear the trademark touch of band member Scott Bennett, lyricist on Wilson's previous master-work, *That Lucky Old Sun*. Next comes a sultry and steamy *Summertime*: Wilson can't quite reach the high notes, but that doesn't really matter. "*Porgy*" follows with Wilson in fine voice. By way of contrast, *I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'* is played as a sort of barn-dance-themed instrumental with rousing banjo, harmonica and bass harmonica. Sweeping cellos and woodwind then segue into a swampy *It Ain't Necessariliy So*, with some pleasing "bom bom boms" and "oooh ooohs" from blonde beauty, Taylor Mills (no-one can "oooh" quite like Taylor!).

'*S Wonderful* teeters on M.O.R (Ray Conniff, anyone?) but is saved by a satisfying flute interlude. A potential single is *They Can't Take That Away From Me*, which inventively imitates *California Girls*. Then it's back to crooner mode with the romantic *Love is Here to Stay*. Elsewhere we find doo-wop (*I've Got a Crush on You*); Spector influence (*I Got Rhythm*); torch song (*Someone to Watch Over Me*) and Springsteen-style mid-tempo rock 'n roll (*Nothing But Love*) before the album ends with a brief reprise of *Rhapsody in Blue*. This is lovingly-conceived work represents another triumph for Wilson and his multi-talented band: his voice will not be to everyone's liking, though his arrangements and production are hard to fault. As for Gershwin, the lyrics veer more to "Moon in June" than "columnated ruins domino", but his melodies retain their lasting appeal.

