

MARIA MULDAUR

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Even if you didn't know at the time of the release of this album in 1973 who Muldaur was, if you flipped the LP over and just glanced at the twelve names and faces who supported her on this album, you couldn't help but be impressed.

Let me give you a few of those. We have: Mac Rebennack or, as he is best known, Dr John. A formidable boogie and blues pianist with a lovable growl of a voice; there's Ry Cooder, an excellent musician and guitar-toting genius who brought the Buena Vista Social Club to wider notice; Clarence White, a gifted guitarist and folk-rock pioneer who was part of The Byrds; David Grisman a bluegrass specialist, Grateful Dead and Jerry Garcia collaborator; Jim Keltner was most associated with the solo works of John Lennon while the rest of the guys were highly-respected and very experience session men.

Muldaur couldn't fail. Well, she could, of course. She could have receded into the background and become a non-entity and allowed her backing musicians to take the centre stage – but that didn't happen.

Even at her tender age Muldaur was a bit of a veteran, having had lots of experience in the Even Dozen Jug Band set up by John Sebastian and David Grisman, and then a time in the Kweskin Band where she met, married and divorced Geoff Muldaur.

Geoff was not only her life partner but also her musical partner so the solo status was scary and rather alien for her.

The thing about the album and the men on it was that they served as Muldaur's support system in terms of both friendship and her musical career.

One of which was guitarist David Nichtern.

Muldaur recalls, "...when I first separated from Geoffrey, he was very encouraging and told me, 'You can do this.' I was just sobbing and I was a mess".

"We had a little talk and he would say, 'Look, people still know you from the Jug Band and if I can get work in these little coffee houses, you can, too.' And so we put together a few tunes and he got us some gigs".

"This was real low profile stuff. I'd be

crying all the way up to the gig and he'd say, 'Okay, dry your eyes and wash your face. We're on in half an hour.' And he was just a very supportive little brother to me".

The album was not only well received it produced a single. And what a single! "Yes, it happened to have a little hit called 'Midnight At The You-Know-What' on it".

She's talking about 'Midnight at the Oasis', of course. This was her first big hit which is still seen as 'the' Muldaur song and is popular, even now with so many people.

"With everybody – it's amazing. It's so weird to me" she said. "Not a gig goes by that several people don't come up and tell me exactly where they were when they first heard that. I guess, a happy memory for a lot of people. People tell me they lost their virginity to that song, they got proposed to, they conceived babies – it was a huge hit all over the world. It was God's way of blessing me, and I'm grateful to that song every day, because it was totally unexpected. That was just the song that happened to click with everybody. So, thank you, God".

Of course, the album is more than just a megahit, it stands on its own two feet as a work of sweetness but it also veers off into some decidedly bawdy tones before touching on the poignant and, with Kate & Anna McGarrigle's Work Song, the positively stirring.

Such is the strength of the tracks on this LP. It's an interesting album too because Muldaur would later move towards more jazz and gospel-infused works but this release rests upon country and blues.

This edition has been released by Exhibit (www.exhibitrecords.com), pressed on 200gm vinyl, released in a thick gatefold sleeve and mastered by Kevin Gray at Cohearent. Quality all the way. Run by ex-Audio Fidelity man Ernie Campagna, Exhibit's re-release is an excellent edition with a well balanced, open sound.

You can hear other releases on the label including Trini Lopez' 'At PJ's' (1963), Lester Flatt & Earl Scruggs' 'Foggy Mountain Jamboree' (1957), The Manhattan Transfer's 'Vocalese' (1985), Johnny Cash's 'Orange Blossom Special' (1965) plus Chet Atkins & Les Paul's 'Chet & Lester' (1976) **PR**