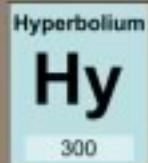


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Review: Connie Smith - Long Line of Heartaches (Sugar Hill, 2011)

Posted by hyperbolium.com on August 23, 2011 at 2:40pm

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Connie Smith - *Long Line of Heartaches* (Sugar Hill, 2011)

Country hit maker Connie Smith first broke through in the mid-60s, scoring a chart-topper with her debut "Once a Day," winning numerous awards and scoring on the charts through the end of the '70s. She mostly retired from recording in 1979, continuing to perform live, dropping a few non-LP singles in the mid-80s and a self-titled album in 1998. It's been thirteen years since that last full-length solo release, and as before, with no mainstream commercial aspirations to sway her artistry, she digs into a rich set of songs, many co-written with her husband and producer, Marty Stuart. The remaining titles are drawn from the country pens of Harlan Howard, Kostas, Patty Loveless, Emory Gordy Jr. and others.



At 70, Smith hasn't the tight vocal control of her younger years, but she still delivers the heart and soul of a country song. Stuart, who produced her last album, knows a thing or two (or three) about framing his wife's singing in twang and blues. Backed by a small combo of guitar (by the stellar Nashville player, Rick Wright), steel, bass and drums, Smith and Stuart checked into RCA's legendary studio B for four days – enough time to lay down a dozen tracks the old-fashioned way – seamlessly weaving together new and old songs into a collage of busted hearts, half-hearted protestations, dried tears, resignation and forgiveness.

Highlights include powerful covers of Johnny Russell's "Ain't You Even Gonna Cry" and Johnny Paycheck's "My Part of Forever," the bouncy acceptance of "You and Me," and Dallas Frazier's newly-minted "A Heart Like You." The set closes with the original "Blue Heartaches" and the spiritual "Take My Hand." The latter, sung with her three daughters, renews the faithful chapter of Smith's career that grew in the late '70s. There's a world of experience in Smith's singing – both personal and professional – and together with Stuart she's revived the experience of '60s and '70s country without treading in nostalgia.

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