

"Any Day Now" - Joan Baez (g. voc); Fred Carter (man); Hargus 'Pig' Robbins (keyb); Stephen Stills, Pete Drake, Harold Rugg (g); Tommy Jackson, Johnny Gimble (v), a.o. Pure Pleasure VSD79306/7

Joan Baez: Any Day Now

Format: 2 LPs / gatefold sleeve

Release date: 18.08.2008

The material -- many of the Dylan classics -- is unsurpassable. Her voice is at its zenith, young, supple -- neither undisciplined (as in her 1st records) nor the later, low vibrato warble. There is none of the self-conscious and silly Dylan vocal imitation found in Baez's later recording. Where Dylan's own singing is wonderfully raw and rough, Baez is clear and pure. Both are great for me, but very, very different from each other. These lovely renditions are like no one else's. Just pure Joan in her finest voice.

She is backed here by several of the very best of '70s Nashville session musicians (pickers). Some folks think of Nashville sidemen as inevitably bound up with Country Music. While this is not counter-country, it fits much more into folk -- as the names Dylan and Baez rightly connote. "One Too Many Mornings" is too often overlooked among Dylan's compositions, and this is among the best renditions I've heard. The full-length, unhurried treatment "Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowland" is spell-binding and satisfying. Perhaps my favorite, though, is the subtle and poignant "Spanish Boots of Spanish Leather." Dylan's lyrical genius is fully manifest, in his gorgeous melody and Joan Baez's a wonderful performance.

For many of us who listened both then and recently, this pristine work inevitably reminds us how much has aged in the decades since this earlier era -- also recaptured so vividly in Dylan's own Chronicles. These are timely works, both for reminiscence and to introduce newbies to the non-acid experiences that stirred an earlier generation.

But regardless of any social import, this is simply beautiful poetry and music.

Recording: 1968 by Selby Cofeen

Production: Maynard Solomon

