

Album of the Month January 2007

Modern Times by Bob Dylan
MVD24

Above all, Dylan, and his producer Jack Frost, must be credited with assembling a mighty fine band to support him on this album (you find yourself using phrases like “mighty fine” when you have been listening to music so authentically, well, *American*, as this).

The other striking feature is how many different styles of music are featured, from the fast-rolling blues of *Thunder on the Mountain* and *Rollin' and Tumblin'*, (nice music, vocals rather suspect) to the gentler feel of *Spirit on the Water*. If you like soft swing/jazz then the latter is the track for you - I almost expected Stephan Grappelli to make a guest appearance at one point. Country-music lovers will likely relate more to the waltzy *When the Deal goes Down*. I particularly enjoyed *Workingman's Blues # 2*, which has an Elton John – style piano intro and arrangement, and Bernie Taupin – ish lyrical feel (and yes, I know they're not American). Oh, and the swing/jazz ballad *Beyond the Horizon* - (think *Red Sails in the Sunset* meets *Over the Rainbow*, with intimations of mortality) - is dead good, too, so to speak.

Through it all, our hero growls his way, with the occasional flashes of brilliant wordplay. If you like your Dylan in his previously typical style, then *Someday Baby* will be more to your taste (acerbic comments directed at “his” woman). *The Levee's Gonna Break* could be a fairly topical reference to Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans, or simply a metaphor for life. Oh yes, and the last track, *Ain't Talkin'*, starts in a mystic garden and finishes with weariness with the world I think.

Overall, well worth a listen.

GW
13/12/06