

MARIANNE FAITHFULL



<i>Recording years</i>	<i>Main genre</i>	<i>Music sample</i>
<i>1964-2021</i>	<i>Folk-pop; Baroque pop</i>	<i>Sister Morphine (1969)</i>

Only Solitaire

Artist: *Marianne Faithfull*

Years: *1964-1965*

George Starostin's Reviews

Page contents:

- [Marianne Faithfull](#) (1965)
- [Come My Way](#) (1965)



MARIANNE FAITHFULL

Album released:

April 15, 1965

V A L U E
2 3 3 4 2

More info:



Tracks: 1) Come And Stay With Me; 2) If I Never Get To Love You; 3) Time Takes Time; 4) He'll Come Back To Me; 5) Down Town; 6) Plaisir D'Amour; 7) Can't You Hear My Heartbeat; 8) As Tears Go By; 9) Paris Bells; 10) They Never Will Leave You; 11) What Have They Done To The Rain; 12) In My Time Of Sorrow; 13) What Have I Done Wrong; 14) I'm A Loser; 15*) Morning Sun; 16*) Greensleeves; 17*) House Of The Rising Sun; 18*) The Sha La La Song; 19*) Oh Look Around You; 20*) I'd Like To Dial Your Number.

REVIEW

Quick, close your eyes and try to remember which of your favorite artists released two different LPs of musical material on the same day — and who of them did it first. Prince? Tom Waits? Guns'n'Roses? Springsteen? Zappa? Donovan? (Some of the lists posted on the Web use **Wear Your Love Like Heaven** and **For Little Ones** from December '67 as an example, but that's really cheating, since both were just two parts of a double album, available as separate purchases). As time goes by, the practice has become more and more widespread, but it seems like those who want to trace back its history never bother venturing too deep into the past, or browsing through the registers of the underdogs.



To the best of my own knowledge, the honor of releasing two different LPs on the exact same day — April 15, 1965, to be precise, and I *do* mean «different», as in «two thematically and stylistically different entities, rather than an artificially separated double album» — belongs to Marianne Evelyn Gabriel Faithfull, a.k.a. the Honorable Hereditary Baroness von Sacher-Masoch who so narrowly missed a chance at gentrifying Michael Philip Jagger (imagine all those Stones hits credited to «Sacher-Masoch / Richards»!). The story goes thus: after being signed to Decca in the fall of 1964 and releasing

two singles, one of which became a pop hit ('As Tears Go By') and the other one a folk flop ('Blowin' In The Wind', no less), the label naturally wanted Marianne to concentrate on her pop side and drop the folksinger act. Marianne refused, and the only way to get her to compromise was to allow her to record two non-intermingling LPs in two different styles — a «pure pop» record and a «pure folk» one, releasing both simultaneously. Ironically, both LPs charted, and the folk one (**Come My Way**) actually rose a bit higher than the self-titled pop one — though both would be Faithfull's only charting LPs until her 1979 comeback with **Broken English**, and even then she would never ever break into the Top 20 again.

Although, technically, of the two twin records **Come My Way** was the first to show its little head (it is catalogued as LK 4688, whereas **Marianne Faithfull** got LK 4689), we shall still begin with the self-titled record — when all the arguments pro et contra are weighted, Marianne still emerges as more of a «pop» than «folk» artist, and it is *this* LP that bears her name, after all. In addition, it was the only one of the two to be simultaneously released in the States, where it also climbed up to a respectable #12 on the charts — a mile higher than anything she'd be able to achieve there in the future.

Two things are immediately striking and potentially treasurable about the record: Marianne's accent and Mike Leander's arrangements, and I don't even know which of the two is more important. Okay, since this is not a Mike Leander record, let us start with the accent. Although in her early, formative years, still relatively free of substance abuse, Faithfull had a clean, melodic soprano, and was capable of striking and sustaining pretty high notes (more prominent on **Come My Way** rather than here), she could hardly boast the confidence and expressivity of a bona fide pop diva like Petula Clark, nor did she have the full vocal power of a Judy Durham. To compensate for this, she did a thing that, perhaps through her invisible aristocratic European family roots, seemed to come fairly naturally — invented her own artistic diction. (One more thing, in addition to those pouty lips, that she had in common with Mick Jagger, who wanted to sound American, but couldn't, so he invented his own Jaggerian dialect of English).

Seriously now, I have never heard any female artist from that era to own the same articulation scheme that Marianne has on her early albums. She may have been a secret fan of *My Fair Lady* and Professor Higgins, but the Mystery Accent that is flaunted here on every single song has not so much to do with the Queen's English as it has to do with... well, think of it as maybe a mix of French Catherine Deneuve-style vowels with Swedish Greta Garbo-style consonants. It's all very subtle, of course — it just requires a tiny shift of focus in one's articulation — but the effect is smashing. With this little bit of trickery, Marianne Faithfull effectively lands the Continent in London in much the same way as Jagger brought the Delta to the same location. Twisted and mutated through the magic glass, but identifiable nevertheless: ridiculous and embarrassing to some

listeners, haunting and otherworldly to others. (For the record, that's just on the record — in her casual conversations, Marianne hardly ever displayed anything other than a [typical, slightly posh British accent](#)).

There is no doubt in my mind that it was this «mystery Eurowoman» flair and little else to make people so interested in the new young artist at the time — the songs that she sang were so much more about personality-dependent aura than about personality-independent musical hooks. However, another important component of that aura were the arrangements. For those, Decca paired Marianne with the young and still totally unknown arranger Mike Leander, whose biggest achievement at the time had consisted of spotting the talents of the even younger guitarist Jimmy Page, and convincing him to do session work as a means to earn a living.

When you put the record on, the first thing you hear is not Marianne Faithfull — it is the bright, sharp sound of a playful harpsichord, an instrument that you are going to get a *lot* of on this album, which, I believe, could be rightfully called one of the first, if not *the* first, authentically «baroque pop» records to be released in the UK. Harpsichords, chamber strings, harps, chimes, woodwinds, you name it — everything we come to associate with the classically-influenced pop records of the swingin' Sixties era is here in spades, making this into one of the richest-arranged records of 1965. At times, the raging complexity of the production seems to go overboard, but it is hard to dismiss the impression of Leander as a little kid who just broke into a closed-off candy store, grabbing whatever he pleases and gorging on stuff as if this were his first and only chance to experience all the delicious tastes. And on top of all this comes Marianne's wonderland-Euroaccent. Who could *not* be enchanted back in April '65?

At the center of the candystore comfortably sits 'As Tears Go By', the song that the Stones may or may not have written specifically for Faithfull — accounts differ here — but which, unquestionably, fits in better with *her* than it would ever fit with *them*: Mick would later do an impressive job trying to re-appropriate the tune for the band, but for him, this required a chameleonic twist and a push for the listener to suspend disbelief, whereas to Marianne, "my riches can't buy everything / I want to hear the children sing" comes as natural as pie, even under the cloud of the Euroaccent. The only advantage that the Stones had when they employed Leander to re-arrange the song for them was his ability to slow down the tempo and make the 1965 version of the song even more baroque than it was in the faster, more upbeat, and inevitably less nuanced version of 1964 (when the arrangement was still under a serious influence from Leander's idol, Phil Spector). But the nostalgic, melancholic, medievalistic atmosphere of the song certainly requires it to be sung by a princess in the tower, and last time they held the casting for princesses in towers, I heard Mick Jagger wasn't doing too well.

It is worth noting at this juncture, perhaps, the weird role played in the life of both Mick and Marianne by the original shapeshifter of their images, Andrew Loog Oldham — who allegedly discovered her at a party, hooked onto her more for her innocent-seductive beauty than her singing qualities (his most famous description was "an angel with big tits"), and decided to market her as his expressly angelic counterpoint to the decisively devilish presence of Mick and the Stones. The way Marianne's «angelic» persona would later rub off on Jagger, as the Stones themselves dipped into baroque pop and literary excursions *à la* 'Sympathy For The Devil', is well-popularized and undeniable — but less explored is the opposite way of Jagger and the Stones' «devilish» personalities rubbing off on Marianne, if only because so few people ever take the time to listen to *her* records. At this starting point, there may be only a slight dot of the Stones' darkness in the works of Marianne, and vice versa, but all through the rest of the Sixties we shall be witnessing an exciting, disturbing, and sometimes creepy diffusion between the two, and at the bottom of it all stands the sick, twisted, but temptingly exciting evil mind of Andrew Loog Oldham, the guy who would probably be «cancelled» in the blink of an eye in the 2020s, but without whose meddling we would probably have been deprived of some of the juiciest artistic achievements of pop music's best decade...

Anyway, back to business. Aside from 'As Tears Go By', the overall track listing on **Marianne Faithfull** is not that terribly exciting or unpredictable. Notable — for a female pop artist — is the total exclusion of American or British showtunes; instead, Faithfull and Leander prefer to rely on contemporary pop and R&B songwriters, such as Jackie DeShannon (who wrote 'Come And Stay With Me' specifically for Faithfull) and Burt Bacharach ('If I Never Get To Love You'), as well as expectedly digging into the French pop songbook ('He'll Come Back To Me', 'They Never Will Leave You') and tipping their hats to the Beatles ('I'm A Loser' — I suppose they specifically wanted to pick out the potentially gloomiest Beatles song to-date, and so they did). The two biggest concessions to the pop glamour of the time are, arguably, the two weakest numbers: 'Down Town', a big hit for Petula Clark whose love-of-life attitude feels alien to Marianne's vocal style (not that this well-acknowledged socialite did *not* love life herself, but her Euroaccent really only worked when the princess was confined to the tower rather than tried to escape it) — and the Herman's Hermits hit 'Can't You Hear My Heartbeat', whose only prominent feature is that you get to hear Marianne make orgasmic noises during the fade-out (few things feel hotter to male audiences than watching hearts of Ice Queens melt before their eyes, even if they're just faking it).

I do not feel the urge to go into details on particular songs, since I have already attempted to describe the most important features which tie them all together — and most of these have been done better by other artists anyway. One big exception is 'Come And Stay With Me', a nice country-influenced pop ditty from DeShannon whose message of innocent loyalty and devotion was clearly written with Marianne in mind: it is hard not to be charmed by her [lip-synced performance](#) from the

Hullabaloo TV show, where a beautiful smile combined with a total lack of motion somehow complete the musical picture. (Compare [Cher's cover of the song](#) which feels so totally unnatural — when Marianne sings "I'll send away all my false pride / And I'll forsake all of my life", you want to believe her; Cher, who is physiologically incapable of conveying vulnerability or loving submission, is definitely not fooling anyone, not even Sonny). Another little baroque beauty, co-written by Jackie with her then-lover Jimmy Page, is 'In My Time Of Sorrow' — a song whose telling key changes from the moody and morose ("in my time of sorrow, in my time of feeling bad...") to the nostalgically uplifting ("oh what I'd give, just to relive all of the good times that I've had...") now sort of eerily predict Marianne's own life story, though she could hardly have imagined the horrors that were waiting for her at the time.

A few of the songs were written by Leander himself (usually credited to his legal name, Michael Farr), and they are neither too good nor too bad — rather decent, moderately catchy, middle-of-the-road pop ditties whose arranging and singing styles are far more memorable than the melodies. The best of these is probably 'Morning Sun', a stately ballad only available on the expanded CD issue of the album — it was the B-side to John D. Loudermilk's 'This Little Bird', Marianne's fourth single which was used to open the US variant of the album (quite a haunting and deservedly successful performance which allegedly brought Marianne a lot of discomfort, since she had to do publicity photos with doves on her shoulders and she allegedly hates birds!). 'Morning Sun' may not be a better song than the A-side, but it definitely has a better arrangement, what with those echoey, weirdly processed harps looping around your ears in the intro, mini-solos from woodwinds and an almost psychedelic fade-out.

A good example where Leander's creativity *really* goes off the rails is their arrangement of 'Greensleeves', which was used as the B-side to 'As Tears Go By'. The introduction, with its echoey background vocals and epic soaring spaghetti-western strings, is practically Morriconesque — 16th century England meets the Wild West! — and the instantaneously recognizable melody of the theme is carried across exclusively by Marianne's vocals, while the wildly rampaging instrumentation around her does everything but that, with violins, cellos, pianos, and percussion creating not so much a single, Spector-style, wall of sound, as building up random mini-walls around the place. It's a weird as heck approach that probably does not work, but is well worth getting acquainted with: I mean, who else would think to fuck so much with frickin' 'Greensleeves' in the fall of 1964? Only a great-great-descendant of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and a guy who took his artistic name from the Greek hero who would cross the Hellespont every night to be with his one true love. In any case, if you ever decide to check all of this harpsichord madness out, it will certainly bring you a different — or, at least, expanded — perspective on the guy who

most people only know for arranging the strings on the Beatles' 'She's Leaving Home'.

Whatever be, **Marianne Faithfull** is a classic, textbook example of how, when you do not really have a huge amount of substance at your disposal, you can still make things intriguing and impressive on the whole by almost literally drowning substance in style. To be successful, the enterprise still depends on a proper alignment of the stars, and few times in the history of popular music boasted a more successful alignment than the brief window of 1965–66 — arguably, neither Marianne's odd enunciation nor Leander's production style would have felt so unusual and transcendent in a post-**Revolver** or post-Hendrix era. (Like many others, I guess, my first acquaintance with Marianne Faithfull was through her performance of 'Something Better' in the *Rolling Stones' Rock'n'Roll Circus*, where she felt totally out of place, out of date, and out of style with everything else that was taking place in late 1968). But in early 1965, this fresh, peculiar take on the young-and-innocent pop diva worked just fine — even if this image was far from the artistic ideal that Marianne herself would prefer to symbolize, and did her best to bring to life on **Marianne Faithfull's** twin companion, **Come My Way**.





COME MY WAY

Album released:

April 15, 1965

V A L U E
2 3 3 4 2

More info:



Tracks: 1) Come My Way; 2) Jaberwock; 3) Portland Town; 4) House Of The Rising Sun; 5) Spanish Is A Loving Tongue; 6) Fare Thee Well; 7) Lonesome Traveller; 8) Down In The Salley Garden; 9) Mary Ann; 10) Full Fathom Five; 11) Four Strong Winds; 12) Black Girl; 13) Once I Had A Sweetheart; 14) Bells Of Freedom.

REVIEW

The standard modern narrative of the rise-and-fall of Marianne Faithfull is that of an intelligent, intellectual young girl who wanted to go to Cambridge (or was that Oxford?) to study English literature, but instead was manipulated by the dominant male pressure of the times into pursuing the career of a pop artist, ruining her life in the process. Part of that narrative is most likely true, but I do not think even Marianne herself supports it *in toto*. After all, from the very beginning she was no shy recluse — the whole «bright lights, big city» thing was every bit as attractive to her as her books — and her ability to secure herself the twin-LP deal with Decca shows that she could stand her ground, at least in the form of a compromise, when it came to identity trading with the music industry.



In particular, it cannot be doubted that she *was* interested in making her mark on the folk music scene prior to meeting Oldham and Jagger, having already landed some coffeehouse gigs in London and stuff; and the fact that for her second single she chose 'Blowin' In The Wind', rather than another pop ballad, means that she had no plans to completely sacrifice

her agency if a musical recording career was in the works. The irony of the event, however, as it sometimes happens, is that in this case a more lasting legacy was left behind by the «marketed» pop single ('As Tears Go By') rather than the «free» folk single — probably the only curious aspect of this Dylan cover is that the acoustic guitar on the recording is played by none other than Keith Richards; since old Keith is not known all that much for being a folk guitarist, he basically just throws out Dylan's melody and plays something close to his acoustic performance of 'Tell Me (You're Coming Back)' on the Stones' debut, and it kinda fits in with Marianne's vocals (she herself follows the bass rather than guitar). The vocals themselves do not amount to much, though, other than showing that she is capable of impressively sustaining a tremolo note. (This is not even mentioning that 'Blowin' In The Wind' belongs to the same category as 'Yesterday', 'Imagine', and 'Country Roads' — a.k.a. «songs that should not ever be covered, under pain of extreme torture, followed by more extreme torture»; and yes, Marianne did cover 'Yesterday' just as well).

For the B-side she made an equally predictable, but slightly more interesting choice of 'House Of The Rising Sun' — clearly following the Animals' rather than Dylan's version, but with Alan Price's organ replaced by Morriconesque strings and a Gothic piano sound, while Keith still provides acoustic rhythm and unidentified backing vocalists ultimately push the mood in the direction of somber Gregorian chanting by the time the verses are over. It's an interesting combination, and the song's dark nature certainly fits Faithfull's style more than the sing-along optimism of 'Blowin' In The Wind', but while it can be seen how she struggles to convey the broken down, dejected, dehumanized, emotion-stripped state of the lyrical heroine, her vocal tone and that odd invented accent do not really get her where she needs to be. It would probably take somebody like Nico to make this stuff *really* work — as it is, it's just a curiosity.

Still, even though the single did not chart (and one can hardly blame the public for not wanting to spend money on yet another cover of a song everybody already knew by heart), this little impediment did not stop Marianne from insisting on recording a full-fledged «coffeehouse folk» record. Since getting Keith to back her up for such a monumental project was out of the question (people might start mistaking him for Donovan and all that), what she did was enlist the services of folk guitarist and singer Jon Mark, formerly of the forgotten folk duo Jon & Alun and later gaining a bit more notability during his several years of tenure with John Mayall and, later, as part of the Mark-Almond group. Mark is in complete command here, writing the title track for Marianne, arranging all the covers, and playing guitar. Interestingly enough, standard album credits never list the rest of the musicians — which, according to the information on Marianne's own website, included not only the famed session drummer Bobby Graham (the same who played on early Kinks singles), but also none other than Jackie DeShannon's boyfriend, Mr. Jimmy Page, on second acoustic guitar and a certain John Paul Jones on bass — this

was certainly not the first time Jimmy and J. P. played on the same record, but it still kind of makes it a must-buy for devoted Led Zeppelin fans.

In fact, this information does matter, because most of the retro-evaluation of **Come My Way** that I have seen predictably focus on the sole aspect of Marianne's singing — and it may, in fact, *not* be the best thing about the record. Take some totally random non-highlight off it, like, for instance, the playfully fast-paced '[Mary Ann](#)', taking care to hear it in the *stereo* version where the two acoustic guitars are separated into different channels, and just focus your mind on the interplay between them and the bass, forgetting about the singer for a sec: isn't that *good*? it's just the kind of complex, polyphonic sound that the Seekers would kill for, just as much as this arrangement would probably kill for a Judith Durham type of voice to complete it. Though Marianne does an okay job, too, but that little folk trio is just too good for her.

The bottomline is that **Come My Way** is definitely *above* average, and does not look half bad against the contemporary background of British folk recording practices — I know for sure I'd take it over any given Shirley Collins album any day (well, maybe any day other than those days on which I'd be exclusively interested in the history of the British folk tradition, which Professor Collins teaches consistently well; *most* days, I am a bit more interested in how 20th century artists digest and interpret the British folk tradition). And for all the indifference that we may fling at Marianne's singing, I think I prefer her brave take on Joan Baez' version of 'Fare Thee Well' to the original — she hits those high notes on "if I go, if I go, if I go ten thousand miles..." right on the nose, and somehow does it with a little more warmth («Euro-warmth?») than Joan did with so much less effort; and that's not even counting the twin-acoustic guitar arrangement on Marianne's version, which blows Baez' standard-fare folk pickin' out of the water.

One other thing the album reflects is the trend to find common ground between traditional folk and modern jazz, which was most notable at the time in the work of Davey Graham. Three tracks on the LP feature heavily jazzified arrangements, the most curious of which is the re-recording of 'House Of The Rising Sun' in a totally different manner — as a triologue between Marianne's «conservative» delivery of the vocals, Mark's bluesy-jazzy acoustic part in which he keeps fluctuating between Lonnie Johnson and Wes Montgomery modes, and Jones' grim, post-boppy, Mingus-influenced bass. The result is more weird than emotionally impressive, but when your experimental recording is made in an era in which the word 'experimental' actually means what it says, «weird» is okay by me. There is also 'Full Fathom Five', on which Marianne recites rather than sings the lyrics, while Mark helps her complete the Beat Café impression; and an equally modernistic reading of Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky', on which the jazz bass takes prominence and Marianne tests her acting skills (I

don't know if she was already pregnant with Nicholas when doing this, but I bet it would have worked great as a scare-you-to-sleep experience for the kid anyway).

The best thing I can say about Mark's only fully original contribution to the album — the title track — is that it fits in perfectly with the rest, a melancholic ballad in which Marianne has to complain about how impossible it is to find true love among all the "wild mountain thyme that grows around my door". Maybe it is because the arrangement is so minimalistic: this is the only track where she is only backed by Mark's guitar, picking out a repetitive and relatively simple pattern, so it ends up reading like a deeply personal manifesto, something for which Marianne really wasn't ready at the time. At least it makes for a much more convincing opening to the album than the closing 'Bells Of Freedom', which is supposed to end the proceedings on a note of triumphant optimism, something for which Marianne *really* wasn't ready at the time — nor, for that matter, at any time ever throughout all of her career. Nothing «rings» as hollow and fake on the album than her "bells of freedom ring, bells of freedom ring for us!" chorus.

Still, on the whole, the album does not leave me with one of those nasty «why the hell does it even need to exist?» kind of feelings. Marianne may have been a far more accidental passenger on the folk train than Judy Collins or Sandy Denny, but at least she bought the ticket herself, *and* she made sure to surround herself with fairly high-class company for the journey. Just as Mike Leander's baroque arrangements gave her the much-needed advantage for her «pop» side, so did Jon Mark's participation seriously ennoble these folk recordings — in the end, while I am hardly head-over-heels in love with either of the two records, I can still heartily recommend them to all lovers of solid, juicy sound... oh, and exaggerated, tragicomically mysterious artificial Euroaccents, of course.

