

AP Wire

Review: Martina McBride, 'Timeless'

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Country fans who lament that their music has gone slick pop can rejoice with "Timeless."

Martina McBride - no stranger herself to overproduction - has produced a wonderful compilation of classics. Not only are the covers true to the originals by the likes of Hank Williams, Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette and Ray Price, they're recorded in a retro style - straightforward vocals and instrumentals by a half-dozen or so musicians, without the electronic frills.

The pedal steel sets the tone in the first few bars of the opening track, Williams' "You Win Again." On "I Can't stop Loving You," the words are those of composer Don Gibson, but the arrangement is Ray Charles. Lynn Anderson's "Rose Garden" is true to the original and "You Ain't Woman Enough" is all Loretta Lynn, just as the largely acoustic "Help Me Make It Through the Night" is pure Sammi Smith.

Dolly Parton joins her for a version of "I Still Miss Someone" that has more lilt than Johnny Cash ever envisioned. Ray Price gets two nods with "Heartaches by the Number" and "Make the World Go Away," although the latter is more Eddy Arnold. McBride and the band even do a tolerable Bakersfield sound with Buck Owens' "Love's Gonna Live Here."

The album contains 18 tracks out of more than 30 recorded the first half of this year. With luck, the remaining dozen or so will form the basis of "Timeless II."