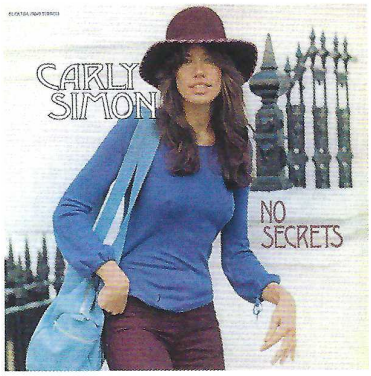


No Secrets

180g

Carly Simon

Elektra/Speakers Corner 75049

The year 2020 may seem like the darkest of times but look back at some old favourite records and they may awaken memories of other very dark times. *No Secrets*, recorded and released in 1972, is a case in point. The Vietnam War was in full and endless swing. The Watergate burglary started the slow drip of scandal. A terrorist attack at the Munich Olympics resulted in carnage. Notwithstanding these intractable problems, 1972 was a high-water mark in film and popular music. Try to think of any other year that gave us movies to equal *The Godfather*, *Cabaret*, and Herzog's epic *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*..

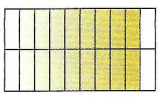
Carly Simon's third studio album, *No Secrets*, received mixed critical reviews. Robert Christgau mocked Simon's voice, musical composition skills, long face, and mouth full of big teeth. However, he missed recognising Simon's inescapable spark that ignited several hit songs from the album. And when record buyers looked at Simon's cover photo, they were surely not focusing on her teeth. The album's monster hit 'You're So Vain' not only became a radio fixture but has scored high on every 'greatest' list ever made for pop singles. It's one of those songs that decades later, every person of a certain age knows the lyrics to. In addition, the album is filled with other outstanding songs, like 'The Right Thing To Do,' 'We Have No Secrets' and 'It Was So Easy.'

One of the album's secrets is that it combined so many exceptional technical achievements, such as the choice of recording studio, recording engineers and even cover photographer. Ed Caraeff, has four Rolling Stone covers and shot countless iconic images, including Jimi Hendrix burning his guitar at the Monterey Pop Festival. The session was recorded and mixed by two world class engineers – Robin Geoffrey Cable and Bill Schnee. Cable recorded Queen, Vangelis, and early Elton John. Schnee, who helped launch Sheffield Lab Records, recorded countless well recorded titles, among them Steely Dan's *Aja* and *Gaucho*. The disc cutter on the original release was none other than Doug Sax. The sessions were recorded in the Fall of 1972 at Trident Studios in London's Soho. Trident, the first studio to employ an eight-track recording deck, was catapulted to fame when The Beatles' 'Hey Jude' and *The White Album* were recorded there. It became a 'go-to' studio for well recorded albums from Apple Records, Manfred Mann, David Bowie, Queen and Elton John.

No Secrets was released early on in every format, with LPs pressed in 18 countries, as well as cassette, 8-Track and reel-to-reel. Always in print, it eventually went the audiophile route with Friday Music issuing an LP in 2009, followed up by SACDs from Audio Fidelity in 2011 and Mobile Fidelity in 2016. None of these caused me to sit up and take a fresh listen. It was nice to have the music well reproduced on a silver or gold disc, perfect music to sing along with in the car. But no earlier version convinced me this was a great recording. This new silicone (and cloud) free reissue so improves on the sound of the album as to turn this shopworn item into a provocative new piece of music.

This new mastering by Kevin Gray of Cohearent Audio opens up this compressed space and reveals an exceptional recording. The instruments are spread out, opened up to the point where you can distinguish the individual voices in the background vocals, like Mick Jagger in 'You're So Vain' or Paul McCartney in 'Night Owl.' Dynamics are significantly improved, making the original mastering, and the audiophile CDs sound comparatively compressed. This music deserves to be turned up loud, and you can now do so without the mix turning to sludge.

Even if your musical tastes incline more to Patti Smith than this slicker product do not let that prejudice deprive you of an extremely well recorded masterpiece. There is no other Carly Simon album that packs so many great songs together nor any better produced or engineered. Carly Simon did it all – Grammy, Oscar, rock star romances – but this is her crowning achievement. **DD**

RECORDING

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