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RITA COOLIDGE

Rita Coolidge prefers modesty when it comes to self-description. "I always sound basically the same when I sing. God knows I never stray too far." But modesty can't conceal her obvious excitement over *Heartbreak Radio*, which she calls "a surprise record, an uncharacteristic album for me. It's me singing, which makes it real familiar, but everyone I've played it for says it's *real* different."

Rita's choice of Andrew Gold as producer (ending her fruitful, ten album association with David Anderle) is where the differences begin. The music itself, high on upbeat material, is another difference. So are the full, spirited performances Gold drew from the rich-voiced lady singer. "I asked Andrew to push me," Rita admits, "and he did. He got me singing stronger than I have in a long time."

She speaks enthusiastically of the whole *Heartbreak Radio* project. "David and I are still best friends, but we had worked together so long, we both decided it was time for a change." While she had never met Gold before 1980, Rita was immediately impressed by the guitarist/arranger's musical knowledge and his energy. "We spent a month going through material, maybe thirty songs a night," she explains. "We did a lot of homework. When we finally went into the studio, we were *ready*."

The preparation paid off, yielding the most varied Rita Coolidge album yet. Throughout, Rita sounds comfortable—and, perhaps more important—challenged by her musical environment. A rousing version of Carole King's "Walk On In," unmistakably Memphis-sounding, leads off a program loaded with surprises; a reggae-fied "Wishin' And Hopin'," two superb Allen Toussaint tunes ("Basic Lady," "I Did My Part"); blues ("One More Heartache"); ballads (Jerry Riopelle's "Man And A Woman"); and churning rock (the album's title track). "Stranger To Me Now" was written by Donna Weiss, best known as co-writer of Kim Carnes' "Bette Davis Eyes."

Heartbreak Radio is but the latest accomplishment of a musical life that began for Rita with a high school trio in her native Tennessee. College followed, as did jingles singing and meeting singers Delaney & Bonnie in Memphis. The duo brought Rita to Los Angeles to sing on their *Accept No Substitutes* album.

In California, she joined Joe Cocker's Mad Dogs and Englishmen as featured vocalist ("Superstar"), and sang on albums by Eric Clapton, Dave Mason, Stephen Stills and others. She signed with A&M in 1971, commencing a career studded with highlights—hit singles "Higher And Higher," "We're All Alone," "One Fine Day," and "The Way You Do The Things You Do"; and best-selling albums (*Satisfied*, *Greatest Hits*, 1977's platinum *Anytime . . . Anywhere*).

She's acted in films (*Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid*, *A Star Is Born*) and worked in television (Canadian TV's "Christmas Raccoons" children's specials). But music remains Rita's lasting love. She'll follow a late summer South African tour with a major U.S. tour this fall. By then, the whole country is likely to be tuned in, loud and clear, to *Heartbreak Radio*.

