

# Review: Joan Osborne digs into her archives on ‘Radio Waves’

By STEVEN WINE an hour ago

“Radio Waves,” Joan Osborne (Womanly Hips Records)

Homebound during the pandemic, Joan Osborne began combing through dusty shoeboxes in her closets, and what she found was still fashionable, because good music never goes out of style.

The boxes contained recordings of at least 100 in-studio radio performances by Osborne dating back as far as the 1990s, and she chose some of the best for “Radio Waves,” a stellar collection of 13 tunes notable for its variety.

Osborne has always been an astute interpreter, and her soulful, smoky alto is a compelling instrument whether she’s singing the blues (“Shake Your Hips”), R&B (“Everybody Is a Star”), Dylan (“Make You Feel My Love”) or the Great American Songbook (“Dream a Little Dream”).

With instrumental accompaniment ranging from an acoustic guitar to a full rock band, Osborne is creative in reimagining familiar tunes. On the Motown standard “How Sweet It Is,” she extracts the sugar by recasting both the rhythm and melody, and the result is something more sensual. A stripped-down version of her unlikely hit “One of Us” more directly conveys the wonder of grace in the commonplace, while Gary Wright’s 1970s hit “My Love Is Alive” becomes improbably funky.

Osborne strikes moods suitable for every broadcast shift, from sunrise to signoff, and seems to know it.

“Good morn or evening, friends. Here’s your friendly announcer,” she sings to begin Stevie Wonder’s “Love’s in Need of Love Today,” a tune with a message worth transmitting 24 hours a day.