

REVIEWS

MACY GRAY

**Covered**

[429 Records]

Fans of traditional R&B pinned high hopes on Macy Gray when her 2000 hit “I Try” became a worldwide smash. Gray has since floundered at times, but this covers album rekindles her old spark. Drawing from a wide range of sources—Metallica, Radiohead and Colbie Caillat, to name just three—Gray interprets these tunes like a playfully sophisticated chanteuse. Typical is her delightful romp through Yeah Yeah Yeahs’ “Maps,” on which she employs jolting tempo changes to convey the song’s urgency. Other fine moments include her take on the Toytes’ “Smoke Two Joints,” a reggae ditty laced with Farfisa organ and a busy bass line, and a dirge-like rendering of Eurythmics’ “Here Comes the Rain Again” that finds Gray smoldering in near a cappella mode. Much credit goes to producer Hal Willner, who provides a plush sound bed upon which Gray can soar. Brief between-song spoken-word “skits”—often with guest artists—lend a fly-on-the-wall intimacy to the proceedings. —Russell Hall

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