

Experience "Crazy Love," With Jackie Bristow

Album: Crazy Love / Artist: Jackie Bristow / 12 tracks / On The Streets Now / Craving Records

The first three times that I listened to Jackie Bristow's CD *Crazy Love*, I wrestled with whether or not she is a better singer than songwriter or vice versa. I came to the conclusion she excels at both! The fact that the pop singer wrote all of the songs for this great CD may in part explain the deep connection she has with the themes of her songs, and why her vocals are so passionately charged.



When you hear Bristow sing, “*I’ve been tempted to wallow hear in my doubt / Be swallowed up in this house and doubled up / I have been affected, you can help me out / ‘Cause I’ve been counting the days / Come on show me the way,*” you are going to be tempted to run right out and purchase her CD or surf online for a legitimate download site. This is one of those times when you should give in to temptation. Accompanying herself on acoustic guitar (is there anything the lady doesn’t do well) Bristow, her fellow musicians and producers Mark Howard and Helik Hadar (Joni Mitchell, Madeleine Peyroux, Rufus Wainwright—as the sound engineer), have cut a track that is deeply grooved, prompts foot tapping and head nodding.

The fifth verse of “Innocence,” would lead one to believe that Bristow, a native of New Zealand, cut her teeth on the music of Joni Mitchell or Carly Simon, as she paints vivid word pictures that easily convey the message of the song. If you cannot walk into this song and take a good look around, then you need to check your imagination pulse. Bristow delivers the lyrics with the tenderness reminiscent of the Belles tune, “Stay Awhile,” written by Ken Tobias. Zac Rae delivers some exquisite keyboarding.

Bristow is a courageous songwriter, willing to take on difficult themes, as she does in “Across The World.” Whether the song concerns a love relationship or a friendship gone south is open to conjecture but she raises some interesting questions for the listener, such as; why do we stay in relationships where we are betrayed? Why do we still miss that attachment and feel a sense of longing, knowing that the betrayal was not just a one-time occurrence? Bristow’s evocative vocals are infused with sadness, but without bitterness or anger. Bristow’s music does not reflect the attitude of some of Jann Arden’s, earlier music, which was often dark and self deprecating, leaving you reaching for another anti-depressant. While the Kiwi explores sensitive issues in relationships, Bristow’s songs leave you with the sense that the singer experiences hope, or has moved on with her life.

Crazy Love, is much more than a book of poems, the lyrics are enveloped in superb musicianship, good hooks that flow naturally rather than being contrived, and awesome melodies laid over good grooves and beats. “Pray For The Love,” serves up just one of many examples of guitarists Mark Punch and Tim Pierce laying down scintillating riffs. The track “Close To The Bone,” is closer to rock than pop and gives us a taste of Doron Cochlin’s chops on the Rhodes, and the always-magnificent Larry Golding’s feel on the Hammond B3 organ.

Bristow’s “The World Is Turning,” gives us something that with only a few exceptions is missing from the pop charts these days, and that is a stripped down, simple melody, with a girl singing about the different colors of relationships, without coming across as manic or depressed. This song should be a popular choice for listeners.

Also figuring prominently on the replay dial should be the song “Rollercoaster,” that has hit tattooed all over its melody. This is a convertible, top down, sunny day, girl singing the chorus, “ooh goodbye,” kind of song.

When you stand in front of the painting of a really good artist, you tend to notice something a little different each time. When you spin Jackie Bristow's CD *Crazy Love*, the same thing occurs. That is the mark of a truly great artist.

Reviewed by Joe Montague for Riveting Riffs (www.rivetingriffs.com)

Reviewed October 2007

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