



Whistling In The Dark

Whistling In The Dark is the latest offering from Grammy nominated vocalist Denise Donatelli. Paying tribute to Burt Bacharach is nothing less than amazing as she continuously illustrates her interpretive range. She masterfully weaves a story through nine songs that fill us with desire, love, heartbreak, separation and loneliness, which are trademarks of this composer.

For those of us who have long been fans and admirers of Denise Donatelli's work, this is not her usual upbeat and fun engagement that has been her wheelhouse. Dark, as in the title track, is the cornerstone of this project, yet she moves through the doubts, fears, sadness and tears of love with an emotional acumen that delivers and raises our own memories of those moments we humans experience throughout our lives.

The orchestration is minimal, a juxtaposition from the composer's earlier arrangements on Warwick's recordings that were filled with lushness, accentuating the lyric for effect. Less is often more and the simplicity in the accompaniment allows her to artfully capture our imaginations.

Of the Bacharach/David songs executive producer Denise Donatelli and producer Larry Klien selected for this recording, five are immediately recognizable, on which Dionne put her indelible stamp during their Sixties reign. There is no comparison, however, in their individual delivery, and no doubt that Ms. Donatelli has set herself apart by raising a quieter, more subtle bar for those jazz vocalists to aspire to.

The title track was composed with Daniel Tashian and *Mexican Divorce* with Bob Hilliard, the latter was written for the Drifters and where Bacharach met backup singer Dionne Warwick. For those of us who haven't followed Bacharach since his Sixties heyday, Klein and Donatelli also chose two refreshing Bacharach/Elvis Costello compositions, *Toledo* and *In The Darkest Place* from their 1998 collaborative album *Painted From Memory*.

Recorded during the height of Covid in late September 2020 over a five day period, there is a relevant sadness to the loneliness society often felt evidenced with a national shutdown, homebound, socially-distanced, eating and/or living alone. The cover photograph embodies that tangible space between shadow and light, a place in which each of us exists, emphasized with the softer interior photo of the artist. The lowercase lettering epitomizes her sense of familiarity with her audience, conveying a cordial invitation to listen.

As for me, I've whistled in the dark and found it to be pleasureable, just like this contribution to the jazz canon. Darkness always withdraws with the approaching twilight, heralding the dawn of the new. Endings are where beginnings launch the next chapter, and Denise Donatelli is already underway to create her next masterpiece. Meanwhile, enjoy this gem.

carl anthony
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