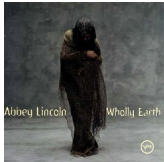


Abbey Lincoln – Wholly Earth (1998)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 19 October 2010 12:25 - Last Updated Friday, 11 July 2014 09:37

Abbey Lincoln – Wholly Earth (1998)



01. *And It's Supposed To Be Love* 5:13 [play](#) 02. *Midnight Sun* 7:23 03. *Wholly Earth* 6:01 04. *Look To The Star* 6:42 05. *Another World* 9:13 06. *Conversation With A Baby* 6:37 07. *If I Only Had A Brain* 5:32 [play](#) 08. *Another Time, Another Place* 7:16 09. *Caged Bird* 7:02 10. *Learning How To Listen* 6:29
Personnel: Abbey Lincoln- Vocals Bobby Hutcherson- Vibraphone, Marimba Marc Cary- Piano James Hurt- Piano John Ormond- Bass Michael Bowie- Bass Alvester Garnett- Drums Nicholas Payton- Trumpet, Flugelhorn Daniel Moreno- Percussion Maggie Brown- Vocals

Undoubtedly, Abbey Lincoln is one of the most intelligent, sophisticated singers out there. Everyone, it seems, has noted her way with lyrics a commitment to the defiance, wry humor, or lovelessness of the songs' emotional world that surely co-exists with her acting skills. Very few people read a lyric as well as Abbey.

On a purely musical level, Abbey's voice is an eccentric and unusual instrument. When matched with the right material, the results are sublime. However, unspectacular accompaniment, arrangements, or lyrics draw the listener's attention to Abbey's vocal shortcomings. Although Abbey does not commit some of the egregious lapses in intonation that mar volume two of her Billie Holiday tribute, "Wholly Earth" does not have the consistent excellence of some of her other albums. Two of those better albums are: "Abbey is Blue" (a 50s collaboration with Max Roach) and "When there is Love" (good songs sung well with sympathetic pianist Hank Jones as only accompaniment).

"Wholly Earth" is somewhere between one-half and two-thirds of a great album. Her original songs fare worst: "Conversation With a Baby" features her musings about the celestial origins of babies, but remains entirely earthbound because its descending melody, harmonic structure, and solos are uninventive. Yet, "And It's Supposed to Be Love" and the title track show that

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Abbey and the band can compensate for some unoriginality in lyric, melody, or harmony with a groove that highlights the musicians' unity of purpose. "Another Time, Another Place" and "If I Only Had a Brain" also deserve special mention as well-performed standards. I think that reviewers and listeners should stop forgiving Abbey's faults in intonation, songwriting, and melodic choices (e.g. a screechy ending that mars a well-performed title track) and push her to exhibit what the best of these tracks show. Five stars? A bit much. Save that for consistent and truly outstanding albums. Perhaps it's time that Verve released Abbey from (or encouraged her to exceed) the pattern of ballads and originals performed with a piano-led trio that most of her Verves follow. *By Miles P. Grier.*

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