

Viktoria Tolstoy & Jacob Karlzon – A Moment Of Now (2013)

Written by bluesever

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1. *I Can Let Go Now* 2. *Deep River* 3. *Red Rain* 4. *A Moment of Now* 5. *Against All Odds* 6. *Hand in My Pocket* 7. *Taking It All Too Hard* 8. *Lessons in Love* 9. *Shadow and Light* 10. *Satisfied* 11. *A Concentrate on You* 12. *Scent of Snow* 13. *Send One Your Love* 14. *Northern Star* Viktoria Tolstoy - Vocals Jacob Karlzon - Steinway grand piano, pump organ, celesta, Fender Rhodes Jocke Bergstrom - Vocals (track 13)

Viktoria Tolstoy is Swedish but is also the great, great granddaughter of the renowned Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy. On this album she sings material drawn from the worlds of pop music, jazz and even classical music. She is accompanied by Jacob Karlzon who also composed the music for one of the songs, *Scent of Snow*.

First time around, I wasn't altogether convinced by the choice of songs on the album. Tolstoy and Karlzon have been a team for almost fifteen years and selected these particular tunes, some because they were familiar and appealing, others because they were new and represented a fresh challenge. On first hearing, I felt that some, at least, were unsatisfactory especially when contrasted with how Viktoria performs Cole Porter's *I Concentrate on You*, the one traditional standard to be found here. It's a convincing rendition, showing what she can do when lyrics and music are of real quality.

Having said that, I found many of the songs grew on me. Viktoria herself has a distinctive voice, jazz-influenced but with more than a touch of soul. She repays repeated listening. She can make the move from a gentle whisper to a more dramatic full-throated sound and she always sings with clarity. Jacob Karlzon's style ranges from pensive, sensitive piano to a more punchy accompaniment, where required. I liked his playing particularly on his own composition *Scent of Snow*, where tune and words make for a happy combination.

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What, then, are the highlights? Deep River has a strong tune, well sung by Tolstoy, with Karlzon contributing a meditative solo passage on what is a beautiful theme. Red Rain, a Peter Gabriel original, features good interpretive work by Viktorija and, at times, forceful support by Karlzen. A Moment of Now is an affecting ballad with a sublime Pat Metheny tune and strong lyrics by Anna Alerstedt, to which Viktorija and Jacob do full justice. Against All Odds is a familiar Phil Collins number, again well performed. Hand in My Pocket offers a more upbeat piece and receives a lively showing from both artistes. Lessons in Love is another lovely melody and is rewarded by strong performances. Scent of Snow, already mentioned, is a quirky piece. Karlzon, improvising well, at times put me in mind of the folk tradition. Send One Your Love is a sentimental Stevie Wonder composition where Jocke Bergstrom shares the vocal honours with Tolstoy. The tracks mentioned are those that carried most appeal for me. Others I judge less successful, to varying degrees.

Viktorija has kept good company in the wider jazz world, for instance, McCoy Tyner, Ray Brown and Toots Thielemans. On the strength of this disc, she probably deserves her status as one of Sweden's most accessible jazz singers. ---James Poore, musicweb-international.com

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