

Madeleine Peyroux – The Blue Room (2013)

Written by bluesever

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01 – Take These Chains 02 – Bye Bye Love 03 – Changing All Those Changes 04 – Born To Lose 05 – Guilty 06 – Bird On The Wire 07 – I Can't Stop Loving You 08 – Gentle On My Mind 09 – You Don't Know Me 10 – Desperados Under The Eaves 11 – I Love You So Much It Hurts Personnel: Madeleine Peyroux - vocals; Larry Goldings - keyboards; Dean Parks - guitars; David Piltch - bass; Jay Bellerose - drums.

The nucleus of Madeleine Peyroux's *The Blue Room* is Ray Charles' *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music* (ABC, 1962). It was an idea percolating in the brain of long-time Peyroux producer Larry Klein, who was considering a re-examination of the Charles classic and evolved into something more than a simple homage, something with the same intention as Charles had fifty years ago. Collaborating with Peyroux, Klein decided on other songs the two favored, adding to the Charles Country canon Randy Newman's "Guilty," Warren Zevon's "Desperado's Under the Eaves" and John Hartford's "Gentle On My Mind," as well as Leonard Cohen's "Bird on a Wire" and the rare "Changing All Those Changes" by Buddy Holly. The result is this ravishing collection of North Americana.

Using only the sparest core keyboard-guitar quartet led by Larry Goldings, Peyroux re-imagines this material, giving its spirit a second generation of consideration. The Charles material was provocative and controversial to begin with, bucking the conventional wisdom of the period recording industry, earning its I-told-you-so genius rating for Charles. While Peyroux's approach is not as shockingly genre-shattering, it is nevertheless a progression using this older music as a vehicle to great effect. Regarding the Charles material, Goldings' use of electric piano is a nice tip-of-the-hat to Charles a la "What'd I Say?" as Vince Mendoza's strings arrangements are for the same.

Peyroux's voice is a paradox. Clearly informed by Billie Holiday, for which she has been

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criticised and praised, Peyroux has assimilated this influence into an instrument as unique as it is progressive. She infuses this famous music with a languid pathos, whose essence is like that familiar but undefinable aroma wafting from the family memory kitchen. "Bird on a Wire" and "Gentle on My Mind" are all morphine and molasses while "Desperado Under the Eaves" and "Guilty" are polished to an antique brass gleam. Peyroux is using a formula used earlier by Cassandra Wilson in the 1990s, one where pop, country and folk songs are given a contemporary makeover. Where Wilson did this very organically, Peyroux retains the more modern jazz trappings, conservatively rendering the old music to make some of the most progressive mainstream art realized. – C. Michael Bailey, allaboutjazz.com

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