

Cassandra Wilson - Closer to You - The Pop Side (2009)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Love Is Blindness* 4:54
2. *Time After Time* 4:07
3. *Fragile* 4:36
4. *Closer To You* 5:48
5. *Last Train To Clarksville* 5:17
6. *The Weight* 6:05
7. *Tupelo Honey* 5:37
8. *Harvest Moon* 5:02
9. *I Can't Stand The Rain* 5:28
10. *Lay Lady Lay* 5:08
11. *Wichita Lineman* 5:49

Cassandra Wilson - vocals
Cyro Baptista - Percussion
Kevin Breit - Banjo, Bouzouki, Guitar, Guitar (Electric), Guitar (Resonator), Mandolin
T-Bone Burnett - Guitar, Vocals
Charlie Burnham - Violin
Lance Carter - Drums
Keith Ciancia - Keyboards, Piano
Jeff Haynes - Percussion
Xavyon Jamison - Drums
Kevin Johnson - Percussion
Calvin "Fuzz" Jones - Bass (Upright)
Jim Keltner - Drums
Mark Peterson - Bass, Bass (Acoustic)
Lonnie Plaxico - Bass, Bass (Acoustic)
Brandon Ross - Guitar, Guitar (Acoustic), Guitar (Steel)
Marvin Sewell - Guitar (Acoustic)
Cecilia Smith - Marimba
Fabrizio Sotti - Guitar
Reginald Veal - Bass (Upright)
Doug Wamble - Guitar (Acoustic)
Chris Whitley - Guitar
Perry Wilson - Drums

When most jazz singers do standards, they come from the "classic" American songbook, the one that includes show tunes and pop songs from a bygone era, one that was powered by names such as Gershwin, Lerner & Loewe, Rodgers & Hammerstein, Sammy Kahn, Johnny Mercer, and so many others. That said, Cassandra Wilson is not just any jazz vocalist, and her Blue Note catalog -- the label she's been with since 1993 -- proves this beyond a shadow of a doubt. Wilson has explored her deep love of jazz and blues to be sure, covering everyone from Robert Johnson to Miles Davis, but along the way she's also covered tunes by modern composers, those who have stormed the pop charts in the last 30 years or so, and those who are still on them. Closer to You: The Pop Side is a retrospective collection that looks at this side

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of Wilson's complex musical persona, and offers a selection of 11 tunes from her Blue Note albums, all of them focusing on songs from the rock, pop, and soul genres, and all executed in her own idiosyncratic manner. The stellar version of Van Morrison's "Tupelo Honey" is sung from a female perspective and drenched in acoustic guitars and upright bass, with a lone snare. Then there is her languid, deeply committed reading of Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time" and her drenched-in-strangeness reading of Neil Young's "Harvest Moon," which is as much ambience as it is instrumentation, with only her voice to hold it in place and keep it from disappearing into the ether. Along the way are signature readings of U2's "Love Is Blindness" and Sting's "Fragile," as well as one of the finest versions of Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman" ever committed to tape, though its scope is very different from the author's or the now canonical Glen Campbell version. Her reading of Ann Peebles' "I Can't Stand the Rain" reflects the singer's deep commitment to the soul vernacular, and while a bit less edgy than the original, it contains plenty of hidden passageways of emotion nonetheless. In sum, this can be enjoyed as a record of both where Cassandra Wilson has been when it comes to reinterpreting the tunes of the current era, and where she has pushed the envelope in terms of the role of the jazz vocalist. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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