

Leyla McCalla - A Day For The Hunter, A Day For The Prey (2016)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 25 February 2019 16:17 -

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1 *A Day For The Hunter, A Day For The Prey* 3:18 2 *Les Plats Sont Tous Mis Sur la Table* 3:13 3 *Far From Your Web* 2:26 4 *Little Sparrow* 3:16 5 *Manman* 4:24 6 *Peze Café* 3:51 7 *Bluerunner [Instrumental]* 2:09 8 *Vietnam* 3:18 9 *Salangadou* 2:55 10 *Let It Fall* 2:50 11 *Fey-O* 3:14 12 *Minis Azaka* 4:09
5-String Banjo, Guitar, Vocals, Triangle [Ti Fer] – Daniel Tremblay Bass, Sousaphone – Jason Jurzak Cello, Tenor Banjo, Guitar, Vocals, Producer – Leyla McCalla Clarinet, Accordion – Aurora Nealand Cornet – Shaye Cohn Electric Guitar – Marc Ribot Fiddle – Louis Michot Viola, Vocals – Free Feral Vocals – Rhiannon Giddens, Sabine McCalla, Sarah Quintana

Very few singers have the qualities that 30-year-old Leyla McCalla brings to this, her second solo album. The former Carolina Chocolate Drop has an unmannered style and a melodic voice that can seem like an extension of her cello playing. She also brings the resonance of history. Born in New York to Haitian parents (and human rights activists), she now lives in New Orleans, a cultural diaspora reflected in a mix of original and traditional songs delivered in English, French and Creole. The arrangements are simple – banjo, fiddle, guitar, cello – but the results often intense. Rhiannon Giddens duets on the beautiful Haitian *Manman*, and guitarist Marc Ribot rocks out on *Peze Café*. A delight. ---Neil Spencer, theguardian.com

The band Carolina Chocolate Drops seems to have become a launching point for a number of talented musicians of late. So, it's little surprise to find one of its key players, Leyla McCalla, following in the footsteps of her ex-bandmates Rhiannon Giddens and Dom Flemons and striking out on her own. Not that she doesn't have support; Giddens, along with Marc Ribot, McCalla's husband Daniel Trembay and Louis Michot of the Lost Bayou Ramblers are among those in the attendance who help ensure McCalla's launch is successful.

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Still, for all that outside assistance, McCalla herself is the one that deserves credit for making "A Day for the Hunter, A Day for the Prey" as interesting as it is. A diverse collection of songs that combines striking originals with traditional tunes culled from Haitian, Cajun and Creole culture, it comes across sounding like folk music with a particularly arcane approach.

A multi-instrumentalist to a great degree, she leans especially heavily on cello and plays it with a decidedly deft touch. Nevertheless, these are mostly bare bone arrangements that belie the number of additional musicians that are fully involved. Indeed, the album could easily have come across as heavy handed, and yet songs such as the title track, "Les Flats Sont Tous Mis Sur La Table," "Manman" and "Salamgadou" are supple and spare, a series of quiet passages sung in a variety of different tongues.

To be sure, "A Day for the Hunter, A Day for the Prey" has its uptempo offerings as well - the jaunty gypsy tune "Far From Your Web," the zydeco sounding "Bluerunner" and the pluck and twinkle "Let It Fall" among them. Ultimately, though, this is a singular statement from an artist who's clearly ready to stand in her own singular spotlight. ---Lee Zimmerman, countrystandardtime.com

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