

Clare Teal - Twelve O'clock Tales (2016)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)
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1 *It Might As Well Be Spring* 3:41 2 *Feeling Good* 5:23 3 *Wild Is The Wind* 3:56 4 *Sans Souci* 3:24 5 *I'll Never Stop Loving You* 5:27 6 *La Bella Dame Sans Regret* 5:05 7 *Lush Life* 5:56 8 *Never Again* 3:34 9 *Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most* 6:46 10 *Always True To You In My Fashion* 3:43 11 *Whole (It Isn't Like Me)* 4:21 12 *Secret Love* 6:27 13 *The Folks Who Live On The Hill* 4:09 14 *Paradisi Carousel* 4:43 Clare Teal - vocals Halle Orchestra Soloists: Iain Dixon (saxophone) Mike Lovatt (trumpet) Jason Rebello (piano) Kaatherine Baker (flute) Stephen Bell - conductor

Propelled by the Halle Orchestra and a cadre of Big Band supremos – among them trumpeter Mike Lovatt, saxophonist Iain Dixon, pianist Jason Rebello and anchored by bassist Jeremy Brown and drummer Matt Skelton – Clare Teal has carved a splendid album. The trio of arrangers are Guy Barker, Grant Windsor, and Rebello.

A slow sense of foreboding opens *Feeling Good*, where a twisted note or two suggests Nina Simone in Teal's adroit vocalizing; don't forget this is a British song courtesy of Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse. The windswept nature painting that ushers in *Wild is the Wind* – with swirling strings to the fore – may seem an obvious enough trope but is a good setting for Teal's characteristically sensitive and unexaggerated, lyric-conscious singing.

She evokes some sultry Peggy Lee licks in *Sans Souci*, and that's always a good thing in my book. Orchestrally things are never laid on too thick, one of the great fears when a mixed-band of this kind conjoins. Thus, *I'll Never Stop Loving You* has a touch of Aaron Copland about the introduction before the Big Band takes on its duties and Rebello launches a fine solo at the keyboard. Note, too, the appropriately Francophile orchestral wind writing in Sting's *La Belle Dame Sans Regret* which Teal sings in French. Teal evinces lyric intensity in the Tim Rice-Alan Menken song *Never Again* – something of the associative intensity that Carol Kidd often

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enshrines, though Teal's voice is deeper.

Indeed, there's much to like throughout these 14 tracks – the kinky boots intro to Always True to You In My Fashion, where later she also sings with a degree of delicious mockery. She chooses songs well. I liked her own co-composition, a tender ballad called Whole (It Isn't Like Me); it would be a good vehicle for Barb Jungr. She's not afraid to sit out either – it's fully a two-and-a-half-minute instrumental introduction to Secret Love, arranged by Guy Barker, before she comes in. And to end there's the chanson lyricism of Paradisi Carousel, written by Teal and her partner Amanda Louise Field – and it's a fine end too.

In short, a lovely record. ---Jonathan Woolf, musicweb-international.com

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