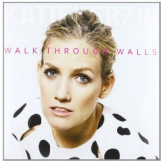


Katie Herzig – Walk Through Walls (2014)

Written by bluelover

Monday, 31 December 2018 15:34 -

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1 *Frequencies* 2 *Drug* 3 *Walk Through Walls* 4 *Summer* 5 *Say It Out Loud* 6 *Your Side* 7 *Lines* 8 *Thick As Thieves* 9 *Humans Too* 10 *Water Fear* 11 *Forgiveness* 12 *Proud* Ruby Amanfu - Vocals (Background) Butterfly Boucher - Bass, Cowbell, Guitar (Electric), Keyboards, Vocals (Background) Eleonore Denig - Violin Jordan Brooke Hamlin - Accordion, Clarinet, French Horn, Guitar (Electric) Katie Herzig - Composer, Instrumentation, Primary Artist, Programming, Vocals Claire Indie - Cello Will Wayles - Drums

Katie Herzig skipped past her folk singer/songwriter beginnings with 2011's *The Waking Sleep*, moving into a dream pop arena full of synths, loops, and beats, and with *Walk Through Walls*, she expands things even more in the atmospheric, confessional dream pop direction, coming up with a multi-layered sound that is as carefully textured, challenging, and complex as it is accessible in a contemporary world, which might explain why so many of her tracks end up in commercials and on the soundtracks to films and television shows. ---Steve Leggett, AllMusic Review

Katie has done it again! I expected a return to more acoustic music after the colorful sonic adventures of *The Waking Sleep*, but instead she's upped the ante with her most electronic – and perhaps her most compellingly human – album to date.

Let's just get something straight before I start to dig into the actual contents of the new Katie Herzig album. It's right there staring you in the face, and it'll become the elephant in the room if I

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don't at least mention it, so... I HATE THE COVER PHOTO. There, I said it. I'm sorry, Katie. I love the music on this album, and that's far more important than whatever imagery you may choose to market your music or to say "This is my quirky personality!" in big bold lettering when some unsuspecting listener stumbles across it on the Internet. The cover of Apple Tree was cartoonish and slightly whimsical. That fit the album perfectly. The Waking Sleep was more pensive, like an innocent, disheveled moment when you had just woken up from a nap or something, and that was a great fit, too. But this is just... yikes. What is the deal with the polka dot dress? Are you trying to fade into the blank white background as if you were emerging through a wall or something? Because I see those black spots all over and the first thing that honestly comes to mind is "Cruella De Vil". And then you just sort of have this blank stare, maybe gritting your teeth slightly, like "Ugh, let's get this photoshoot over with, I've got a record to finish!" I'm generally not one to play fashion police, but this just isn't flattering or representative of the fantastic album within. OK, that's out of my system now. On to the music!

The world of indie pop has brought me a few nice surprises in 2014, but none have consumed me quite so much as the 12 songs on Walk Through Walls. When I first became acquainted with Katie's music in 2008, I thought of it as whimsical, poppy folk music, the kind that went down incredibly well in a coffeehouse setting with just enough respectful silence between songs for the artist's self-deprecating jabs at her own love life (or lack thereof) to be warmly appreciated by the crowd. The Waking Sleep found her expanding her palette a bit, bringing in more percussion (she played the drums in her former band Newcomers Home, after all) and a bit more programming, and bolder pop hooks in general, couched comfortably in between some of the curiously pretty quieter moments on the album. It was a weird balance, the sort of thing I figured might be a one-off experiment before she returned to "her roots", whatever that's supposed to mean anyway, on her next album. I loved that record for all of its quirks – it really brightened late 2011 and early 2012 for me (which were otherwise very dark times), and it even proved to be influential on my very favorite songwriter of all time, Vienna Teng, who borrowed producer Cason Cooley to make her own colorful electro-pop statement on last year's Aims. See, Katie? You're moving up in the world!

Cooley is back in the saddle with Herzig on Walk Through Walls, and this time they've managed to accomplish the seeming paradox of making her sound even more electronic and yet less upbeat. Don't get me wrong – this is still a fantastic pop record, one that brims over with the childlike joy of discovering what happens when you merge the skeletal structures of a few programmed beats and synths with more spontaneous bits of playing around on live instruments in the studio. There are definitely a few singles in the waiting that could go toe-to-toe with "Free My Mind" or "Hologram" for a slot on that list of songs that you just can't get out of your head. But this album's real heart lies in its softer, more mid-tempo moments, when what could have been mere cold machinery instead gives way to heartwarming empathy and occasionally a bit of soul-straining sorrow. This is Katie's most human record so far, which isn't to say that her songs lacked depth before, but here you can really feel that she's lost someone she loved and that she's learned more about what makes the human heart tick in the

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process. I don't hear anything resembling an acoustic guitar in most of these songs, but thanks to Katie's gift for crafting compelling melodies and thoughtfully-phrased rhymes, I don't miss her "old sound" at all. (Which isn't to say that I wouldn't be massively intrigued to hear this one get the "acoustic trio" treatment... but that's a thought for another day.)

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