



Catie Curtis **"Dreaming In Romance Languages"** Vanguard Records

This collection, Curtis' first for Vanguard, and her seventh CD recording, opens with "Saint Lucy." Saint Lucy of Syracuse is the Roman Catholic patron saint of blindness, and, coincidentally, also happens to be the name of Catie's newly adopted daughter. In the singer/songwriter world the dividing line between fact and fiction often appear blurred. Opening with some power chords, from organist Julie Wolf, in the first verse of "Saint Lucy" Curtis sings, *"I woke up dreaming in romance languages, tangled stories by ghostwriters, but more like screaming, like my eyes in bandages."* History tells us that the romance languages are French, Italian and Spanish, and following that opening reference there's no further mention of them on this album, while the image of "eyes in bandages" obviously triggers the Saint Lucy connection. The second verse name checks the musician Laura Love, with *"Ms Love's doing magic tricks"* and is followed, later, by the obtuse *"and the next thing I know, I am right there in the front row, trying to crawl inside her smoke and mirrors..."* Basically the lyric amounts to an entreaty [to Saint Lucy] for guidance in this seemingly crazy world, where the masses find worth in a stream of glittering, but ultimately vacuous, celebrities. Part and parcel of the foregoing process is the reality that artistic creations of substance and worth go largely unnoticed.

Maintaining that heavenly theme, albeit, down here on earth, in "Deliver Me" Curtis attests *"All the angels that I know are fallen and broken, Soaking in the muddy river,"* followed by *"All the angels that I love they don't hang out above, They come down to deliver, And they deliver me."* Initially the lyric hints at the recent break up of a relationship, but soon shifts focus to the aforementioned earthbound creatures that perform acts of mercy as they – *"deliver me."* "Hold On," which immediately follows, contains a lyric that, without a shadow of doubt, expresses regret at causing upset. The song closes with the narrator's earnest hope that her[?] expression of contrition will avoid a parting. If you had to pick a turntable hit from this collection, "Hold On" is the melodically hook laden, dead ringer.

"The Night," a Morphine song, is the only cover on this collection and was composed by the band's leader the late Mark Sandman. It was also the title of the band's posthumous Y2K album. Catie's 2001 album **"My Shirt Looks Good On You,"** also a Curtis/Trina Shoemaker co-production, featured Sandman's previously unrecorded song "Patience." By the way, Tom Dube also shares credit for the production for **"Dreaming In Romance Languages."** *"Is it about love, or how you inspire me"* sums up the punch line of the love ballad "It's The Way You Are," wherein the narrator expresses personal self-doubt with, *"You are everything I could never be, I want to look at life from the top of your tree."* In a later verse, *"life"* is substituted by *"love."*

The lyric to "The Trouble You Bring" relates how *"love's too dangerous,"* while musically the song is underpinned by a funky beat. The couple in "Cross Over To Me" voice their love for each other while parted by distance - *"half a world away."* "Life Goes On," as a song title, is self-explanatory, and opens with a reference to how *"some things got broken"* during the recent winter. Giving witness to the renewal that comes with the arrival of spring, Curtis offers *"the sweetest flower waits all winter long, after all that has gone wrong,"* and later intimates that the angels *"cry in reverence, over what man will do to man."* Basically speaking the lyric explores everyone's need to leave behind a positive reminder of their time on planet Earth.

Rhythmically "Red Light" possesses a happy-go-lucky melody, and initially the narrator refers to a *"Red light across a grey ocean, It's a fire on the bay."* As this cautionary *"it all happened before"* tale unfold, the narrator intimates that the Fire Marshall suspects the landlord of the penny arcade of setting the fire -

again! "Doctor" like "Saint Lucy," amounts to an entreaty for guidance, and in the opening verse Curtis envisions "*all the people living life in peace.*" In the next verse Catie refers to America as a greed ridden "*candy land,*" while in the closing one there's mention of the birth of Jesus, and how later, as an adult, he attempted to guide this myopic world on to a path of righteousness. The closing cut, "Dark Weather," is an edgy number that is filled with metaphorical references to the problems couples often have to face, and defeat, in order to stay, "*together.*"

On "**Dreaming In Romance Languages**" Catie is supported by guitarist Kevin Barry, the aforementioned Julie Wolf, the mandolin of occasional song collaborator Jimmy Ryan [Blood Oranges], while backing vocals come from Mark Erelli, Deb Talan, Jennifer Kimball [the Boston based one] and Kris Delmhorst.

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

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