



Mary Black **"Full Tide"** 3U Records

This is Black's first studio album since **"Speaking With The Angel"** [1999]. Having, in the main, from her early '80's solo debut onward, featured material penned by writers bred and based in Ireland or with an Irish ancestry [and lyrical inspiration], during the early nineteen-nineties Mary altered tack and commenced a serious, and ongoing, *"hand-in-hand"* flirtation with the creations of North American and British songwriter's. In the span of four albums, commencing with **"The Holy Ground"** [1993], the Dublin bred songbird covered song poets such as John Gorka, Sandy Denny, Jesse Winchester, Larry Klein, David Gray, Richard Thompson, Ron Sexsmith and Dougie MacLean [and more]. Black's long-time producer Declan Sinnott departed the fold following **"Circus"** [1995], and the mainly American recorded follow-up **"Shine"** [1997] suffered from Larry Klein's trademark heavy-handed approach to production.

The twelve cuts on **"Speaking With The Angel"** [1999] were produced by a series of contributors and that's also the case with **"Full Tide."** The dozen songs include a pair penned by Mary and her son Danny O'Reilly - and that's a first, while the remaining contributors are the now customary international mix of songwriters. According to the liner booklet, Mary cut sixteen songs in the process of recording **"Full Tide,"** and four of them are scheduled to be available from her web site in early 2006. The album opens and closes with a song by the late Noel Brazil [1957 – 2001], respectively "The Land Of Love" and "Japanese Deluxe," and the collection contains two other Brazil originals, "The Real You" [aka "Full Tide"] and "Straight As A Die." Of the later quartet, there's a short repeated piano insert in "The Real You" ala Springsteen, while the bonus cut "Japanese Deluxe" is the clear Brazil winner. As for other Celtic contributions there's a tune from regular Australian/Irishman Shane Howard. He co-wrote "St. Kilda Again" with his brother Damian [Ploughboys], and it recalls the demise of Shane's 80's folk/rock band Goanna, while the trad. arr. "Siul A Run" is a variant of the well known "My Johnny's Gone For A Soldier," and Mary sings the latter lyric in English and Irish Gaelic.

From across the Atlantic, Bob Dylan's "Lay Down Your Weary Tune" dates from 1964 and [finally] appeared on the Minnesota kid's 1985 retrospective **"Biograph,"** although The Byrds included an excellent version on their 1966 sophomore CBS album **"Turn! Turn! Turn!"** Mary's hymn-like choral interpretation seems pedestrian in comparison. "To Make You Feel My Love" another Dylan tune appeared on **"Time Out Of Mind"** [1997] and comes over as slow paced, melodic love ballad. According to the **"Full Tide"** liner, Robin and Linda Williams and Jerome "Jerry" Clark penned "Don't Let Me Come Home A Stranger," while the Williams' web site only credits Robin and Jerry, relative to the song's first appearance on the Williams' 1984 album **"Close As We Can Get."** The credit for the song on their 1993 **"Live"** recording, additionally name checks Linda. Confused – naturally!

While I'd agree that Sandy Denny's "Who Knows Where The Time Goes" is one of the finest, most thoughtful late 20th century folk songs in circulation, I'd find it hard to acknowledge that her catalogue was peppered with many other memorable gems. Black's piano and violin led interpretation of "Full Moon," the closing track on Denny's 1977 album **"Rendezvous,"** comes across as a meandering, ordinary love song. The first of the pair of Danny O'Reilly/Mary Black collaborations is "Your Love" and, if I had to hazard a guess, I'd say that the lyric recalls Mary's beloved mother, and one time dance band vocalist, Patricia [d. 2003]. Mary's **"Live"** [2003], a CD/DVD release, included a documentary in which Patricia appeared. "Stand Up," the frenetic sounding second effort by mother and son, adopts "standing by your beliefs" as it's lyrical theme, but in terms of aural sustenance it's lightweight filler.

Once upon a time Mary Black albums were swamped by classic [albeit easy listening] songs penned by Jimmy McCarthy ["Katie"], Thom Moore ["The Fog In Monterey" and "Carolina Rua"] and Noel Brazil ["Ellis Island"].....

Folkwax Score 6 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 12/05.