



Jane Siberry “**Hush**” Sheeba Records

On this collection of ten [cover] songs Jane Siberry, a truly original and unique performer throughout her career in music, explores the universe of, mostly traditional, American and Celtic spirituals. Last century, during the twilight of the seventies, a fledgling Siberry performed folk music as a solo act at the Carden Street Café in Guelph, Ontario. Almost two decades later and supported by an *army* of musicians, **Maria**, her final album for Reprise, overflowed with jazzy extemporisations. In that regard, Siberry’s multi-faceted career path has, musically, been akin to that taken by country-person, Roberta Joan Anderson. With the subsequent birth of her own label, Sheeba, Jane’s recordings reverted to simpler musical presentations. During 1997 Siberry collaborated with Darol Anger on his acoustic masterpiece, **Heritage** [subtitled *new interpretations of American roots music*], and performed two haunting versions of *O Shenandoah* on that disc. The latter song closes this set and forms part of the American contingent that includes *The Water Is Wide* and *Ol’ Man River*. In the process of gathering songs for this collection, and by way of acknowledging her ancestral voice Siberry included the Welsh hymn, *All Through The Night* - her maternal grandfather’s favourite. *As I Roved Out* and *False False Fly*, were also drawn from Celtic sources. Geographically, *Ponchartrain* may be set in the American south but the lyric employs the voice of a wandering Celt forced to leave the love of his life. The “*young cowboy dressed up in white linen*” in *The Streets Of Laredo* recalls the persistently brutal and terminal outcome of gunplay, that was once part of everyday life on the American frontier. Despite the world-weary and sometimes tragic lyrical content of many of the songs, Siberry’s arrangements draw this disparate collection into a brilliantly uplifting celebration of life by using her voice as the centrepiece. The minimal use of supporting instruments, mainly piano and keyboard, further underscores the [foregoing] aural essence of the recording. Add to that Jane’s two and three part harmonies, as well as the layering and intertwining of the lyrics into what can only be described as *vocal tapestries*, and Siberry’s **Hush** deservedly qualifies for the accolade, truly inspirational.

Folkwax Rating 8 out of 10

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