



Various **"Born To The Breed"** Wildflower Records

The full title of this fifteen song compilation is **"Born To The Breed: A Tribute To Judy Collins."** In a recording career spanning five decades, Collins is to folk music as Emmylou Harris is to the country genre. Both artists, early in their recording careers, covered traditional material and songs penned by others, and only found their voice as songwriters following a number of releases. It took seven albums for Collins the composer to surface from the chrysalis. By the time she recorded **"Wildflowers"** [1967], having already covered Dylan, Cohen, Mitchell and others contemporaries, she was doubtless inspired and challenged – that collection included a pair of Collins originals. From time to time further compositions surfaced, and fifteen of them performed by, mostly, folk and country performers constitute this collection.

One of Collins' most prolific songwriting efforts was the 1973 Elektra Records release **"True Stories And Other Dreams."** She penned five of the album's nine songs and they all feature here. Shawn Colvin opens this tribute with a simple but effective voice and acoustic guitar rendition of one of the latter - "Secret Gardens" - a memory of Collins' Seattle birthplace and recollection of beloved ancestors. "Easy Times," performed here by country artist Jim Lauderdale, was co-penned by Collins and Stacy Keach [*] for the latter's movie **"The Reporter."** The song's only [previous] appearance was on the live album **"Living"** [1971], and it is followed here by Dolly Parton's overly intense interpretation of "Fishermen Song." Listed on the liner as "Fisherman's Song," I've used the title that appeared on **"True Stories And Other Dreams."**

Rufus Wainwright tackles "Albatross," the first **"Wildflowers"** cover – both of which appear here, while The Webb Sisters – Charlie and Hattie – perform "Fortune Of Soldiers" from Judy's CBS recording **"Fires Of Eden"** [1990]. "Song For Martin" appeared on Collins' 1973 album, and "Born To The Breed" on **"Judith"** [1975]. Wildflower label mates the former song is reprised by Kenny White, the latter by Amy Speace. Collins has consistently drawn lyrical inspiration from events in her life. Martin Hoffman [+] was a musical acquaintance of Collins' during her teen years in Colorado who subsequently committed suicide, while the latter was written for her only child, the late Clark Taylor [d. 1992 - suicide]. **"Born To The Breed"** features two interpretations of "Since You've Asked," one sung, the other spoken. Joan Baez, whose folk music career has paralleled Collins' is the singer, while the disc closes with a narration by Leonard Cohen. Chrissie Hynde's rough and ready pop and rock credentials appear a hindrance when it comes to interpreting the subtle nuances that permeate the classic "My Father," [partially] a fond remembrance of Judy's musician father, a radio performer in Seattle and Denver during and following WW II. A great song, sadly a lacklustre reading. Taken from **"Who Knows Where The Time Goes"** [1968] if your record collection does not yet include this disc, it is missing an essential element.

"Trust Your Heart" the title and opening song on Collins' 1987 Gold Castle Records album of the same name – and also the title of her autobiography - is performed by Bernadette Peters, while Jimmy Webb interprets "The Fallow Way" – a reflection on the cycles of life - which appeared on her Elektra Records 2CD retrospective **"Forever"** [1997]. The fourth and fifth contributions from **"True Stories And Other Dreams"** find Dar Williams tackling "Weaver Song [Holly's Song]" aka "Holly Ann" – written for Judy's youngest sibling - while the penultimate cut, "Che," is performed by James Mudriczki. Not intended as a soundtrack album to her novel of the same name, a number of tracks on **"Shameless"** [1995] did however parallel the 'rock 'n' roll music' storyline. "Song For Sarajevo," performed here by Ali Eskandarian, was not one of the latter. Rather, it was a reaction to what had occurred in the former Yugoslav city a few years earlier. Collins, a spokesperson for UNICEF, visited Bosnia Herzegovina during 1994 and the song resulted [from that visit].

Released by Wildflower Records, a label that Collins co-founded with Katherine DePaul just prior to the turn of the new millennium, in recent years the label has added a number of artists to its roster. On “**Born To The Breed**” label performers include Kenny White, Amy Speace and Ali Eskandarian.

Note.

[*] – Collins and Keach were in a relationship for a number of years.

[+] – Hoffman penned the music that accompanies the Woody Guthrie lyric “Deportee [Plane Wreck At Los Gatos]”.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10.

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 01/09 & 02/09.