



Catherine MacLellan THE RAVEN'S SUN (Album Review) Self-released

Death, redemption and renewal permeate the lyrics of MacLellan's fifth solo outing.

Recorded in Rhinebeck, New York at The Clubhouse, an analogue studio, and produced by her partner Chris Gauthier who plays electric and acoustic guitar, mandolin and adds support vocals throughout, Prince Edward Island based MacLellan (vocals, acoustic guitar) is joined on her fifth solo outing by previous contributor Remi Arsenault (bass, acoustic guitar) plus fiddlers Jay Ungar and Andy Leftwich, respectively, on one and two songs. Compared with this Canadian songwriter's previous band oriented outings, *The Raven's Sun* is a sonically stripped-down affair.

The Pacific Coast of British Columbia is home to native tribes that possess a rich linguistic and cultural heritage. Album opener "The Raven's Sun," was inspired by the Haida legend that a raven brought the sun, and therefore light, to the sky. MacLellan's interest in writing about this particular avian species was further sparked by ravens nesting near her PEI home. As for her upbeat lyric it focuses upon the narrator's life emerging from darkness into light. Our flight capable, feather friends featured prominently on Catherine's previous outing *Silhouette* in the shape of "Black Crow," "Sparrows" and her father Gene's major hit "Snowbird." Here, "*the sun*" furnishes a recurring lyrical theme.

At the outset of "Don't Call Me Stranger" the narrator offers a furtive alternative "*If you see me in the crowd, and you're too scared to call out, Give me a sign, give me a sign, I'll come round.*" A finger-picked acoustic guitar delivers the melody to "Tell Me Luella," a heartfelt tribute to Catherine's late grandmother - "*The toughest little gal to ever leave the Prairies, She travelled east to watch the rising sun.*" According to the musician her ancestor was an active woman, "*When she passed away, I saw all these great photographs of her in the old days, with all of her curling friends.*" Death also permeates the ensuing "Gone Too Soon," a tribute to a neighbour.

The rhythmically urgent "Jack's Song" and the ensuing melodically gentler "Beneath The Lindens" are graced by Leftwich's fiddle. In the latter Catherine recalls her teenage years spent in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, (her) hit songwriter father Gene, and some early relationships. MacLellan has fought depression for most of her life and "Rushing Winding Wind" focuses on those friends who come to your aid in times of need. A wistful waltz, the narrator of "Left On My Own" daydreams of sailing the seas and discovering "*where the sun goes.*" Gauthier's finger-picked acoustic guitar introduces "Frost In The Hollows," a road song/seasonal portrait of the natural world that surrounds "*my little mountain home.*" The penultimate "Hold On"

is a paeon to supporting a friend through hard times, and *The Raven's Sun* closes with "Winter Spring" (another) paeon to the cycle of the seasons.

<http://www.catherinemaclellan.com/> and <https://myspace.com/catherinemaclellan>

Brought to you from the desk of the Folk Villager.

aka Arthur Wood.

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