



Catie Curtis “**Long Night Moon**” Compass Records

Three years on from her short, one album lay-over at Vanguard Records, Curtis’ sixth, major label solo release “**Long Night Moon**” comes to us c/o Nashville based Compass Records. In recent times singer/songwriter Mark Erelli, when not pursuing his own career, has toured with Catie as her guitarist. Lorne Entress, producer of Erelli’s five Signature Sounds albums, takes the helm for “**Long Night Moon**.” The result? – assisted by the support players and backing vocalists Lorne has skilfully fashioned and burnished a classic Catie Curtis song collection. Those support players include guitarists John Jennings [Mary Chapin Carpenter], Mark Erelli and Kevin Barry [Paula Cole, Jonatha Brooke], drummer John Sands [Aimee Mann] and bassist Mark Rivard [Jonatha Brooke]. The backing vocalists include Mary Chapin Carpenter, Kris Delmhurst, Erin McKeown and Mark Erelli.

A song for seekers [of love], “Find You Now,” featuring Kris Delmhurst on harmony vocals, comes replete with images of church bells ringing and flowers floating on a river. “Strange” finds the narrator attest in the opening lines how things around her are changing, yet “*her eyes are the same.*” Where person-to-person communication, verbal as well as non-verbal, constituted an essential element in the opening cut, communication resurfaces in “Strange” via the repeated “*All I wanted was to kiss you once.*” “Water And Stone” features Mary Chapin Carpenter harmonies and, in the opening verse, initially hints at ‘a passing’ with “*You walking into the waves.*” Later, the narrator offers “*When I carried you back home, I thought you’d want to be saved.*” It’s not a massive stretch to figure that Curtis’ principle [subjective] focus is the emotion, love. The chorus to “It’s A Wonder” includes the line “*It’s a wonder I found you.*” Pursuing further that human emotion, “Rope Swings And Avalanches” may be the song title, but those words are mere poetic devices, used to describe the cycles of joy and sorrow we experience on the voyage of life.

Catie and Mark Erelli wrote “People Look Around” based on the events that unfolded in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Their raison d’etre, in Curtis’ own words “*To express our believe that government should exist to serve the common good, not to divide us.*” Judged from 15,000 entries, submitted from 82 countries, spread over numerous musical genres, the song recently won the Grand Prize in this year’s International Songwriting Contest. Sponsors of the contest include ASCAP, Berklee College Of Music, Epiphone, Moog Music and numerous others. In the opening verse the song draws attention to the subterfuge practised by the incumbent government, “*If they can keep us fighting about marriage and God, They’ll be no one left to notice if our leaders do their jobs*” and later “*If they can keep us fighting another endless war, How many tears before the truth cannot be ignored*” while the message is driven home by the oft repeated “*The truth is bigger than these drops of rain....falling.*”

In addition to Catie’s acoustic guitar and vocal, the sonically stripped down “Innocent” features Kris Delmhurst on cello and the piano of Elizabeth Steen. Similarly stripped down, the second Curtis/Erelli collaboration “Passing Through” only features the writers – acoustic guitars and voices – as they offer their early 21st century take on our allotted ‘three score and ten’ and the ‘footprint’ we leave our heirs. There’s a gospel feel to the melody, and as Messrs. Curtis & Erelli attest, in this push-button television age, for better or worse, “*this whole world’s our neighbourhood.*” If everyone was to adopt the dictum “*If I can’t change the world, I’ll change the world within my reach, What better place to start than here and now with me and you*” we would begin to heal many of our self-inflicted ills.

Catie mentions the golden state in the lyric to “Strange,” and “Hey California” finds Curtis comparing her ‘cold’ East coast Boston home and its ‘warm’ inhabitants, with life in the ‘sun’ blessed west. The cut features an Erin McKeown backing vocal. “New Flowers” is a song for [and about] Catie’s young

daughters. Featuring some fine accordion fills delivered by Entress the penultimate cut “Hard Time With Goodbyes” is self-explanatory by its title alone, while the melodic “Long Night Moon” is a rather delicious ‘goodnight’ lullaby that ends this engaging collection on a high.

Folkwax Score 8 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 08/06.