



Jane Siberry “**Love Is Everything**” Warner Bros./Rhino Records

This two-disc, thirty-track collection *reprises* [could be viewed as a bad word choice !] the career to date of heaven’s choir mistress here on Earth, Siberry. Not, Jane Siberry. Simply, Siberry. Apart from a few glowing [and logically explainable] exceptions, her songs pretty well appear in the order in which she wrote them. The traditional folk song “The Water Is Wide” and the Welsh hymn “All Through The Night” are the only covers. In a twenty year long career of experimentation with word, melody, style and song form, Siberry also tested the limits to which the sound of instruments and the human voice could be pushed and stretched. It’s no idle boast that Siberry is utterly unique. Time passed, some things changed, others remained constant – while the thread that linked them remained a visionary and creative constant. Siberry’s compositions are not merely songs, they’re beautifully executed symphonies.

Having just used the words, “*others remained constant*,” let’s focus on the glowing exceptions. One of cuts on Siberry’s 1980 self-titled, folk influenced, debut recording “The Mystery At Ogwen’s Farm” explored the disappearance of a cow called Bessie. Sixteen years later, the debut recording on Siberry’s own label, Sheeba, was a collection titled “**Teenager**.” The fourteen songs, penned by Siberry during her *teenage* years, included “Bessie.” Sometimes years apart, Siberry’s songs revisit a previously employed theme. In this particular instance, the songs were written around the same *teen* time. It’s also worth noting that Siberry’s family line includes a Welsh branch. “Ogwen” is a typically Welsh name, and the liner notes confirm that the song lyric was inspired by a visit to a Welsh relative. “You Don’t Need” follows the latter pair of songs, and appeared on Siberry’s sophomore album, “**No Borders Here**” [1984]. The lyric of “You Don’t Need” contains references to the slag heaps of Merthyr Tydfil and the “frozen dirt” of Beddgelert. On the second disc, “Mimi On The Beach” precedes “Mimi Speaks.” The former comes from the aforementioned “**No Borders Here**” while the latter was specially composed for Siberry’s 1996 Bottom Line Christmas concerts. Siberry’s wicked sense of humour gurgles to the surface with the revelation that surfer Mimi’s name is really, Ruth. Closing the second disc is the song quartet “Map Of The World,” Parts I to IV. “Map Of The World (Part IV) : Pilgrim,” is the only previously unreleased Siberry song symphony on this retrospective. In terms of age, the song quartet dates from 1984 through 2002. *Some things changed, others remained constant*.....

In the past I’ve employed the word quirky to describe Siberry’s work, but that word smacks of some strangeness. On this collection you can hear her marriage of traditional and contemporary folk, pop, jazz and electronic music. Siberry doffs her cap to classic English literature with “Barkis Is Willin’,” and has created a modern day Xmas carol of palpably stunning beauty in “Are You Burning, Little Candle.” She extemporises upon the theme of an acclaimed twentieth century musical in the jazz tinged “Maria,” and with “The Squirrel Crossed The Road” proves that *impressionism* and *reality* aren’t restricted to the combination of paint, brushes and canvas.

Siberry is a force of nature, in human form. A wonderfully creative being. Inventive, says it. Committed, says it. Remarkable, says it. Siberry says it all.....love is everything.

Arthur Wood
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