



Christine Lavin "I Was In Love With A Difficult Man" Redwing Records

Christine Lavin returns with further extracts from her diary, now encapsulated in a twelve song recording. Pat Crawford Brown, Christine's actress aunt [**"Sister Act"** etc] penned "Oh Carolyn" in memory of Carolyn Crawford Bennett, and it segues with Christine's "Something Beautiful." The aforementioned pair of songs are by way of an uplifting eulogy to – "a mom, a sister, an aunt, a volunteer, a grandmother, friend, a wife" - who is now gone, but who left her own *beautiful footprint*. The album liner also features a dedication to the late Dave Van Ronk, Christine's friend and one time guitar teacher.

The album title track opens this collection, as Lavin repeats the title over and over and over, ala the doo wop / pop vocal style and feel of a fifties girl group. You can even picture them, with those stereotype - long flared petticoats n' skirts, white ankle socks, flat shoes, two-foot wide sparkling smiles, hand claps and their hair tied up in bunches. So here's to, the innocence we once knew. From the twisted mind that brought you the epics, "Doris & Edwin : The Movie" and "Shopping Cart Of Love : The Play," Lavin now delivers "Jack & Wanda." In the liner Christine recalls meeting a late sixty something couple - "a little old lady in love with a little old man" - on a plane flying to Atlanta, as they celebrated the latest *anniversary* of the day they met. The enquiry, "Which one?" brought the reply "172 months today." Impatient for the annual date to roll around, the pair now celebrate *the date* on a monthly basis.

A road song with a difference, "Strangers Talk To Me," suffers from a surfeit of needless sound effects. "Sunday Breakfast With Christine (And Erwin)" is a word heavy [so many words, so much food !], jazz driven exploration of Lavin's favourite recipes. All this, and it's also the *day of rest*. One thing though, I can't wait to buy the recipe book.

There are numerous ways of disguising the inexorable progress of time, but when you reach the stage of "Making Friends With My Grey Hair," it means that you have, finally, undergone a true reality check. Extending the boundaries [of the latter lyric] to include a once "*stick*" thin body that is now generously "*round*," Christine decides to abandon her expensive hair stylist and the local health club. The *dollar truly drops* when she realises the new financial implications – tickets to concerts and plays, supporting public radio, buying good books, taking lesson from a gourmet cook and, finally, the annual cruise on a liner – are all now within her budget.

The sound of one set of "Wind Chimes" can be pleasant and soothing, but when Lavin's holiday resort literally begins to chime in unison, she feels justified in taking the law, aka a baseball bat, into her own hands. Manic, Christine destroys every wind chime "*within a mile of this place*." Job done, there is of course always a payback – with the onset of night-time the silence is broken, again, by the resort's cricket population.

"Firehouse," Lavin's 911 song, also appears on the twenty-track "**Vigil**" CD which Suzanne Vega and The Greenwich Village Songwriter's Exchange have produced to benefit the Widows Of Hope Family Relief Fund. The "Firehouse" has always been there, supporting the community, yet was hardly noticed by the local population till disaster struck. The "*missing*" photos posted on the red firehouse door are a testament to "*the slender thread of optimistic hope*." When that "*thread*" finally snapped, the hard lesson of *permanent loss* struck home....and hard.

Excepting the [obvious] melancholy of the Brown/Lavin composed segue and "Firehouse," it pays to lighten up occasionally, and application of your laser light to a Christine Lavin compact disc is one of the best ways I know how. So much woman, so much lyrical fun.....

Folkwax Rating 6 out of 10

Arthur Wood

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