



## Barbara Keith “**Barbara Keith**” Water Records

Barbara Keith opens this reissued 1972 recording with a cover tune, Dylan’s “All Along The Watchtower.” While it sets out sedately enough underpinned by the sound of John Brennan’s acoustic guitar, once drummer Jim Keltner enters the fray, over time, he imperceptibly increases the drumming rate, and when the electric guitars of David Cohen [but not the one-time Country Joe guitarist] and Tony Peluso [Carpenters] join in, they whip up a veritable sonic storm. So, basically, we’re talking rock track, and then the songs on this album take a sharp left turn.....since Keith penned the remaining [nine] tunes.

The ballad “Rolling Water” is straight out of early seventies singer/songwriter territory, ala James Taylor and Carole King. What is probably Barbara Keith’s best known song “The Bramble And The Rose” follows, but hold on a minute.....the rear inlay card, sadly, substitutes “Bush” for “Rose” in the song title. An inexcusable typo I would say. Mary McCaslin and the late Jim Ringer included a classic version of this country-tinged song on their 1978 Rounder/Philo duo album of the same name. In fact, in terms of their physical attributes the song, lyrically, was *purpose built* for Jim and Mary. Songwriters spend a lifetime trying to create a timeless song that appears, to all intents, traditional. Some never succeed but Keith did, on at least one occasion, with “The Bramble And The Rose.”

Piano led, with a string quartet joining in partway through, “Burn The Midnight Oil No More” finds Keith use vocal phrasing similar to that employed by Judy Collins on Randy Newman’s “I Think It’s Going To Rain Today,” a track on Collins’ classic 1966 album “**In My Life.**” Ringing the rhythmic changes, “Free The People” is a chunk of pure white soul, a genre that was popular on both sides of the Atlantic during the late sixties/early seventies. It’s not surprising that one of the finest exponents of the genre, Delaney & Bonnie, cut this tune. “Detroit or Buffalo,” another ballad paced tune, which immediately follows, was covered by Melanie on her album, “**Arabesque**” [1982].

“Shining All Along” has a inbuilt goodtime feel that is emphasised by a coterie of brass players [none of whom are credited in the liner]. Although “A Stone’s Throw Away,” co-written with her, then, husband-to-be Doug Tibbles, doesn’t result in a sonic storm that matches the opening cut, it’s a rock based number that’s reminiscent of the sound associated with The Band at their peak, and, I guess, hints at the Keith/Tibble electrically driven power trio, The Stone Coyotes, which surfaced in Massachusetts in the late nineties. Barbara is supported on this closing number by a soulful sounding team of female vocalists, who, again, are not credited on the CD liner. Or for that matter on the liner of the original vinyl release, since I own a copy. Valerie Carter’s 1977 CBS album “**Just A Stone’s Throw Away**” featured the latter song, and it also reappeared on Val’s 2CD, live, Japanese only release “**Midnight Over Honey Water**” [2003].

History tells us that, disappointed with the final production, back in 1972, Keith repaid her advance money and walked away from Warner Bros., and, for decades, the life of a touring musician. That said, on this singer/songwriter collection there’s an occasional and pleasing waver in Keith’s voice, when she aims for high notes, on cuts such as “Rolling Water” and “The Bramble And The Rose.” Those songs hint at what might have been, [on subsequent recordings] had the songbird chosen to promote “**Barbara Keith.**”

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

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