Jeanne Lee feat. Ran Blake - The Newest Sound Around (1962/2013)

1 Laura 5:12 2 Blue Monk 4:48 3 Church On Russell Street 3:13 4 Where Flamingos Fly 4:17 5 Season In The Sun 2:30 6 Summertime 4:32 7 Lover Man 5:16 8 Evil Blues 3:08 9 Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child 2:46 10 When Sunny Gets Blue 4:54 11 Love Isn't Everything 1:20 12 Vanguard 3:14 13 Left Alone 2:52 14 He's Got The Whole World In His Hands 2:06 15 Straight Ahead 3:12 Jeanne Lee – vocals Ran Blake – piano

"Third stream" may have been the bandied term, but this unjustly ignored 1962 duet set, the debut for pianist Blake and singer Lee, who worked up their act while studying at Bard College, plays blissfully free of the lumbering lugubriousness and Big Mac-thick philosophizing that mar so much of that music. The eeriness, the mystery, and the sweetness lie always in the deceptive simplicity, never more so than on the opener, "Laura," sketched by Johnny Mercer as a hazy image of loveliness, always out of reach and perhaps not even real, and she flickers in and out of existence with the strike and fade of Blake's figures, the attack and decay of Lee's intonation, now husky, now fruity, but as exacting as Miles Davis' muted trumpet. "Church on Russell Street" is Blake's alone, a gospel show for solo piano late at night, or early in the morning, when everyone but the pianist and maybe the Lord has gone home. "Where Flamingos Fly," from which Van Morrison peeled a few leaves years later, finds Lee a mournful anti-siren, losing her lover and a few members of the animal kingdom to an island that may be Aruba, Iceland, or even Alcatraz; Blake tests single notes like water drops, rumbles chords for incoming tide, stabs boldly at the not quite in tune top octave on his keyboard. "Season in the Sun" (nowhere near Terry Jacks) injects levity with bassist George Duvivier sitting in (as he does on "Evil Blues," the second dash of comic relief) and Lee dryly, slyly insinuating the brevity of her bikini. "If there's going to be an enduring 'new wave' in jazz styling...this voice, this piano may well be the beginning," reads an uncredited blurb on the cover. The record started no revolution, probably because no other two performers had such chemistry or such a distinctive reaction. As jazz styling, though, it endures unsurprisingly. You hear the set in less than one hour (four CD-only bonus tracks included). You spend decades wandering inside the sound, as you might inside a sonic Stonehenge, savoring each new vantage point discovered, and the impossibility of discovering them all. ---Andrew Hamlin, AllMusic Review

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