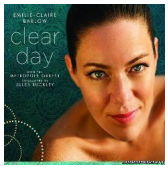
Emilie-Claire Barlow - Clear Day (2015)



01. Amundsen (Feat. Metropole Orkest) (0:59) 02. On A Clear Day (Feat. Metropole Orkest) (5:17) 03. Midnight Sun (Feat. Metropole Orkest) (3:55) 04. Because (Feat. Metropole Orkest) (4:51) 05. Fix You (Feat. Metropole Orkest) (5:40) 06. Unrequited (6:35) 07. Under Pressure (Feat. Metropole Orkest) (5:00) 08. Si J'etais Un Homme (Feat. Metropole Orkest) (4:59) 09. It's Just Talk (5:12) 10. Feelin' Groovy (4:27) 11. La Llorona (Feat. Metropole Orkest) (7:17) 12. I Don't Know Where I Stand (Feat. Metropole Orkest) (4:10) 13. Sweet Thing (3:22) 14. Mineiro De Coraçao (3:55)

Ten albums in, jazz artist Emilie-Claire Barlow has proven herself to be a dazzling singer and an exceptional interpreter of jazz standards, French chansons, Brazilian favourites and many more musical styles. With every song or project Barlow takes on, she aims to dismantle a piece and rearrange it back together into an unrecognizable but exciting new work that confidently bares her signature. That continues to be the force that drives her latest collection of songs on Clear Day, which you can stream in the player above one week before its release.

With this new album, Barlow presents a coherent narrative that is spoken through the words of artists spanning all genres and time periods, from Brad Mehldau to Coldplay. These venture far outside of the classics she is used to performing, but it’s a gamble that pays off when she cleverly pulls a mélange of folk and rock staples into the realm of orchestration.

Instead of relying on the dramatic flair of electric guitars and stomping drums in songs like Queen’s "Under Pressure" or Coldplay’s "Fix You," Barlow infuses real tension in an intricate composition of strings, horns and clear-ringing piano parts. Barlow’s takes never strive to compete with the original; instead, each song presents itself independently as a new standard of its own.

This album took four years to shape and helps illustrate Barlow's emotional process of leaving a marriage and finding new love. It all began on an experience sailing through Nunavut on the CCGS Amundsen where the trip forced her to "take stock of her life and make significant changes," as the press release said.

From there, she went about a rigorous process of finding songs that would really speak to her personal journey. "Each song represents my state of mind, a turning point, a crossroad," Barlow said in her press kit. "The important thing was that the song needed to convey that particular moment in time."

Clear Day also extends its ambitions globally. Teaming up with collaborator Steve Webster, the duo wrote arrangements in Mexico, enlisted an orchestra to record in Amsterdam and Barlow herself added parts in Toronto and complete vocals in Montreal. On top of that, the record also features the 70-piece Metropole Orkest. Again, the results are some of Barlow's most daring, thrilling pieces yet and, with an expansive new look on life and music, it'll be interesting to see what she tackles next. --- music.cbc.ca

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