

Charles Lloyd & The Marvels - I Long To See You (2016)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Masters of War* (8:05) 02. *Of Course, Of Course* (6:04) 03. *La Llorona* (6:02) 04. *Shenandoah* (6:23) 05. *Sombrero Sam* (7:31) 06. *All My Trials* (5:02) 07. *Last Night, I Had the Strangest Dream* (4:49) 08. *Abide with Me* (1:22) 09. *You Are So Beautiful* (6:05) 10. *Barche Lamsel* (16:26) Bill Frisell - Guitar Eric Harland - Drums Norah Jones - Vocals Greg Leisz - Guitar (Steel) Charles Lloyd - Arranger, Flute (Alto), Sax (Tenor) Willie Nelson - Guitar, Vocals Reuben Rogers – Bass

Saxophonist Charles Lloyd has been working with guitarists periodically since the 1950s: Calvin Newborn, Gabor Szabo, John Abercrombie, and others have played in his bands. On *I Long to See You*, he (with his stellar rhythm section -- bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Eric Harland) renews that relationship with two gifted players: Bill Frisell and Greg Leisz (the latter on lap and pedal steel). This program yields folk and spiritual songs, re-recordings of Lloyd's own tunes, a pop nugget, and a new original. In what feels like the input from the label, there are two guest vocal appearances to boot: Willie Nelson beautifully delivers Ed McCurdy's antiwar classic "Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream," and Norah Jones offers a slow, dreamy reading of "You Are So Beautiful."

I Long to See You feels more like a collaboration between Lloyd and Frisell than a leader date, which is sometimes problematic: these men can be overly deferential to one another. The album starts promisingly with a brooding read of Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" that threatens to explode at any moment. Frisell and Leisz (who have worked together a lot) take it through deep winding blues, building tension before Lloyd enters and carries it toward the outside before returning to blues, while Harland's circular drumming becomes somberly hypnotic. Lloyd plays flute on "Of Course, of Course" (originally recorded for an album of the same name for Columbia in 1964). Like its predecessor, it's tough, swinging post-bop with colorful slide guitar work and rim-shot syncopations. "La Llorona," from Lloyd's ECM years, is a standout: it captures his open, mournful, Spanish-tinged wail, fleshed out by elegant, timbral guitars, a sad bassline, and Harland's magical timekeeping. "Shenandoah" (which Frisell has recorded

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before), "All My Trials," and "Abide with Me" are all melodically attractive, but they lack the undercurrent of passion Lloyd has imbued traditional material with in the past. He and Frisell appear so seduced by their melodies, they treat them as fragile objects, not songs whose meanings need to be further explored.

Frisell's speculative solo intro on "Sombrero Sam" is overly long; Lloyd's rhythmic sweeping flute doesn't enter until five minutes in, and slips out too quickly. The lone new tune, "Barche Lamsel," more than compensates. Over 16 minutes in length, it's easily the most exploratory thing here. It commences slowly but starts cooking five minutes in. Lloyd and the rhythm section are at their modal improvisational best, moving through folk, funk, blues, Eastern modes, and post-bop. Frisell and Leisz lend fine solos as well as layered textural and atmospheric support. The tune is a journey that ends in a question mark. I Long to See You is well worth investigating even if, at times, it is overly tentative. --- Thom Jurek, Rovi

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