Lisa Bassenge - Canyon Songs (2015)

1 Riders On The Storm 2 Angeles 3 'Aht Uh Mi Hed 4 All Stripped Down 5 For What It's Worth 6 Last Chance Texaco 7 The Same Situation 8 Searching For A Heart 9 Her Town Too 10 I Just Wasn't Made For These Times 11 Blue Skies Lisa Bassenge (vocals) Till Brönner (trumpet) Pete Kuzma (Hammond B3, electric piano) Steve Tavaglione (keyboards, electronic wind instrument) Vinnie Colaiuta (drums) Dan Lutz (bass) Freddy Koella (guitar, violin) Larry Klein (electric percusiion, vibraphone)

A strange, yet compelling, album by Berlin based Bassenge. A program of jazz covers selected from tunes by The Doors; The Beach Boys; James Taylor; Buffalo Springfield; Tom Waits; Shuggie Otis; Stephen Stills; Rickie Lee Jones; Joni Mitchell and others. Although Bassenge is based in Berlin, Blue Skies has nothing to do with Irving Berlin! This is one of two Tom Waits numbers - All Stripped Down is the other.

The basis of the album is a selection of songs inspired by the landscape and atmosphere of Los Angeles and Southern California. At first I found it difficult to describe it as a jazz album but, after listening a couple of times I found it even more difficult not to describe it as a jazz album! Certainly Till Brönner's Milesian trumpet playing is as plaintive and as emotional a tug at the heart strings as I've heard from any contemporary jazz trumpet player and Bassenge has that smoky quality to her voice that so many of the greats have be it Peggy Lee or Melody Gardot or, indeed, wor (local dialect) own Lindsay Hannon and Zoë Gilby.

Bassenge is working the same side of der straße as Lindsay and Zoë and I'm sure our girls will like this disc. Conversely, I think Bassenge would recognise their status too! ---Lance, lance-bebopspokenhere.blogspot.com

Lisa Bassenge is a Berlin-based jazz singer and tracks from this new album are already winning airplay on the more savvy soul and jazz radio stations who are clearly impressed by her take on the classic songs of the Golden Age of LA and Southern California pop and rock.

The tune that is currently being heavily rotated is Lisa's version of the Doors' 'Riders On The Storm'. Always a dark tune, Lisa and producer Larry Klein retain the mystery but add a strange mix of melancholy and soothing balm via the melding of Lisa's other-worldly vocal and Til Bronner's eerie muted trumpet... a sensitive reading that Jim Morrison would have been proud of!

It's possibly because of its familiarity that that's the track that winning the current attention but after a few spins you'll be beguiled by Lisa's versions of James Taylor's 'Her Town Too' and Joni Mitchell's 'The Same Situation'. On both, Ms Bassenge achieves the same enigma levels of the originals. Ditto her reading of the great Brian Wilson's 'I Just Wasn't Made For These Times'. Superficially this is a very simple song and Lisa adds to that angle with a little girl lost vocal but Klein's production (notably highlighting Steve Tavaglione's soprano sax) creates a real introspective depth.

The other songs on the set come courtesy of Shugie Otis, Tom Waits, Stephen Stills and Rickie Lee Jones and Bassenge and Klein's treatment of them oddly make melancholy acceptable. Here we have jazz channelled through classic rock via Ibizan chill... and it works beautifully.
---soulandjazzandfunk.com

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