

Sarah McLachlan – The Essential Sarah McLachlan (2013)

Written by bluelover

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CD1: 01 – Vox 02 – Steaming 03 – Ben’s Song 04 – The Path Of Thorns (Terms) 05 – Into The Fire 06 – Drawn To The Rhythm (Live) 07 – Back Door Man (Live) 08 – Possession 09 – Good Enough 10 – Elsewhere 11 – Fear 12 – Ice Cream (Freedom Session) 13 – Hold On (Freedom Session) 14 – Dear God 15 – I Will Remember You (Studio Version) 16 – Building A Mystery 17 – Sweet Surrender CD2: 01 – Adia 02 – Angel 03 – Silence (Feat. Sarah McLachlan) 04 – When She Loved Me 05 – Blackbird 06 – The Rainbow Connection 07 – Fallen 08 – Stupid 09 – World On Fire 10 – Push (Live) 11 – Witness (Live) 12 – Time After Time (Feat. Sarah McLachlan) 13 – River 14 – Ordinary Miracle 15 – Don’t Give Up On Us 16 – U Want Me 2 17 – Loving You Is Easy 18 – Forgiveness 19 – Illusions Of Bliss

Sarah McLachlan has been enchanting listeners with her music for 25 years, beginning with her debut album *Touch*, in 1988. Her voice has remained as true and pure as ever through the years, soaring over beautiful and perfectly planned musical arrangements to great effect. The two discs include material spanning her entire career, both live and studio, alone and in collaboration with others. There are 30 songs included, from deep cuts to the familiar hits.

The thing that sets McLachlan apart and keeps her fascinating is not just the beauty of her voice and the textured and interesting musical arrangements that underpin it, but the total honesty and often heart-wrenching emotion of her lyrics. That said, she can also bring new depth and meaning to songs you’ve heard a thousand times by many artists. Witness the versions of “The Rainbow Connection,” “Blackbird,” “When She Loved Me” from *Toy Story*, and Joni Mitchell’s “River,” as well as the duet with Cyndi Lauper on “Time After Time” from disc two. She makes these familiar songs sound fresh and worth listening to many more times, by the sheer magic of her voice.

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Of course, the songs beloved by McLachlan's many fans are here. "Angel" is still one of the most beautiful and heartbreaking songs ever written. "Building a Mystery," "Sweet Surrender," "I Will Remember You" and "Adia" continue to weave their magic spells and let us peek straight into McLachlan's soul.

As for the other material, disc one consists entirely of McLachlan's own material except for "Dear God" (originally by XTC). Some listeners will prefer songs such as "The Path of Thorns, The (Terms)," and "Into the Fire," which have a bit heavier accompaniment that balances the vocal and adds emotional impact to the songs, while others will be enchanted by the more ethereal numbers like "Steaming" and "Ben's Song." There are two excellent live songs here which illustrate the singer's ability to maintain that perfect pitch and purity in performance: "Drawn to the Rhythm" and "Back Door Man."

Disc two includes more original material and the covers mentioned above. It also contains two more extraordinary live performances: "Push" and "Witness." In addition, there's the popular late '90s trance number by Delirium featuring McLachlan, "Silence," and a highlight for this reviewer, "Ordinary Miracle," co-written by Dave Stewart and Glen Ballard and from the motion picture Charlotte's Web.

Every listener will have their own favorites out of these 30 songs, but overall, this collection proves that McLachlan is consistently listenable, capable of inspiring joy and tears simultaneously to sensitive ears, and blessed with arrangements, musicians, and production professionals who know exactly how to complement her voice and material. This compilation will be a treasure to every one of the myriad of fans of this amazing woman and her music.
–Rhetta Akamatsu, blogcritics.org

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