## Liza Minnelli – Gently (1996)



1. Chances Are 2. You Stepped Out of a Dream 3. Embraceable You 4. Close Your Eyes 5. Some Cats Know 6. Lost in You 7. I Got Lost in His Arms 8. It Had to Be You 9. Never Let Me Go 10. Does He Love You? 11. In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning Musicians: Liza Minnelli, Johnny Mathis, Donna Summer (vocals); Ray Ellis (conductor); Roger Kellaway (conductor, piano); Jack Cavari (acoustic guitar); Timothy May, Grant Geissman, Michael Landau (guitar); John Tropea (electric guitar); Nino Tempo, Gary Foster (saxophone); Chuck Findley, Randy Brecker (trumpet); Billy Stritch (piano, background vocals); Pete Jolly, Mike Renzi, Herbie Hancock (piano); Robbie Buchanan (keyboards); Emil Richards, Terry Gibbs (vibraphone); Dave Stone, Chuck Berghofer, Jim Hughart, Robert Magnusson, Will Lee, David Finck, Neil Stubenhaus (bass); Albie Berk, Bill La Vorgna, John Guerin, John Robinson (drums); Lenny Castro (congas, percussion, tambourine); Paulinho DaCosta (congas, percussion); Melissa Manchester, Brenda Russell, Bruce Roberts, Brooks Arthur (background vocals).

If anyone is entitled to cash in on the renewed renaissance of classic pop (not to mention space-age bachelor pad) music, it's Liza Minnelli, who not only has a pedigree to match the likes of Natalie Cole, but has also been at it longer. At 50, Minnelli no longer has to choose between her heritage and her generation, and the assurance with which she tackles material like George and Ira Gershwin's "Embraceable You" and Irving Berlin's "I Got Lost in His Arms" is striking. But she was equally at home with such rock-era work as "Chances Are" (on which she's accompanied by Johnny Mathis, who made it a hit) and Leiber & Stoller's "Some Cats Know" (which was bringing down the house on Broadway in Smokey Joe's Cafe at the time of the album's release). If this album does not live up to its title or to Minnelli's liner notes description ("sentimental, romantic and sometimes foolish" songs sung "hopefully, tenderly, and most of all...gently"), that's only to say that among the many favorable things you could say about the material and Minnelli's performance of it, "gentle" is not one of them. The singer's intensity is always tempered with warmth, her power checked by careful attention to details of lyric meaning and the nuances of feeling available through her phrasing. But Liza Minnelli just isn't a gentle singer. Maybe she should have stuck with the title scrawled on the back of the CD booklet: "The Makeout Album." ---William Ruhlmann, Rovi

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