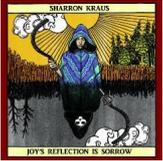


Sharron Kraus - Joy's Reflection Is Sorrow (2018)

Written by bluelover

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1 *My Danger* 2 *Figs And Flowers (Oh, Sweet Dawn)* 3 *The Man Who Says Goodbye*
4 *Joy's Reflection Is Sorrow* 5 *Sorrow's Arrow* 6 *Secrets* 7 *When Darkness Falls* 8
Death And I Backing Vocals – Nancy Wallace Backing Vocals, Recorder, Viola da Gamba,
Fiddle [Baroque], Flute – Jenny Bliss Bennett Double Bass, Bass Guitar – Neal Heppleston
Drums – Guy Whittaker Synthesizer, Organ – Oliver Parfitt Written-By, Vocals, Acoustic Guitar
– Sharron Kraus

Sharron Kraus should be a name that is familiar to all lovers of psych and modern acid folk. For the last 16 or so years she has tirelessly been releasing classic and timeless wyrd folk both under her own name and with contemporaries and friends such as fellow United Bible Studies member Michael Tanner, Gillian Chadwick of Ex-Reverie (under the name Rusalnaia), as Traveller's Two with Fursaxa's Tara Burke and with US psych legends The Iditarod. In particular, her 2013 solo acid folk masterpiece 'Pilgrim Chants and Pastoral Trails' and 2015 baroque opus 'Friends and Enemies; Lovers and Strangers' are essential listening and should be sought out with urgency.

'Joy's Reflection Is Sorrow' shifts Kraus' sound once more, this time towards the more psychedelic fringe of folk, as evidenced on the dreamlike and wistful opener "My Danger". Bubbling synths undercut the growing vocal harmonies and descending guitar motif to create something both unearthly and, whilst inviting, also unnerving. This is Kraus' forte, to merge beauty and melody with an edge that keeps things unpredictable and often deliciously otherworldly. "Figs and Flowers" follows in this vein, woodwind and an insistent guitar melody conjuring an early 70's sense of rustic psychedelia that, with its upbeat surface appeal and undercurrent of melancholy, would not feel out of place on Susan Christie's 'Paint A Lady' or Jade's 'Fly On Strange Wings'. 'The Man Who Says Goodbye's plaintive country guitar peals and reflective mood remind this listener of moments from Chris Bell's tormented yet compulsive long player 'I Am The Cosmos'; the song is further blessed by backing vocal harmonies from The Owl Service's Nancy Wallace. The album's title track is next, beginning with a regal

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keyboard melody before recorder, flute and fiddle supply a chamber folk platform for the ethereal yet earthy chorus that follows; aficionados of Sandy Denny's more orchestrated oeuvre will adore this.

"Sorrow's Arrow", meanwhile, returns to the sadder shores that Kraus evokes so effortlessly, an ominous and creeping wraith of a track that builds to include squelching analogue synths, flute and layered vocals. The album as a whole tends to reflect this mirror image of hope or joy versus sadness and trouble; from its title to the excellent cover art by Nick Taylor, of Kraus herself as both cloaked in sunlight and in darkness as death, each track seems to position itself on one side, the next often taking the opposite stance. In keeping with this theme, the bewitching "Secrets" is filled with light, slide guitar and fiddle propelling the song along between verses whilst "When Darkness Falls" has an offbeat, eerie allure; again hinting at a kind of twisted country music. Special mention must be made of Kraus' vocals, pure, emotive and of the Shirley Collins' school of storytelling and folk singing in that she doesn't add frills or over-embellishes; she tells the tale that is therein and embodies the song rather than showcases. The album closes with "And Death And I", a string driven and haunted gothic lullaby that lingers on in the mind long after the song itself has finished, its spectral woodwind and viol stabs adding a genuine tension and drama.

Sharron Kraus has built a hugely impressive and highly recommended back catalogue that demands discovery (if you haven't done so already). 'Joy's Reflection Is Sorrow' is another shining jewel in this veritable treasure chest and one that readers of MOOF will, most certainly, greatly enjoy. ---Grey Malkin, moofmag.com

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