

Stacey Kent – I Know I Dream: The Orchestral Sessions (2017)

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1 *Double Rainbow* 4:32 2 *Photograph* 6:07 3 *Les amours perdues* 4:19 4 *Bullet Train* 7:31 5 *To Say Goodbye* 5:17 6 *Make It Up* 4:57 7 *Avec le temps* 4:19 8 *I Know I Dream* 5:36 9 *La Rua Madureira* 4:51 10 *Mais Uma Ves* 6:24 11 *That's All* 5:38 12 *The Changing Lights* 6:19

Contrabass Clarinet – Steve Morris Double Bass – Jeremy Brown
Drums – Joshua Morrison Electric Bass – Curtis Schwartz (tracks: 4) Flute – Eliza Marshall, Holly Cook, Patricia Moynihan, Sarah Newbold, Siobhan Grealy French Horn – Andy Sutton, Corinne Bailey, Joanna Hensel, John Thurgood Guitar – John Parricelli Harp – Sue Blair
Piano, Keyboards [Fender Rhodes], Keyboards – Graham Harvey Saxophone, Alto Flute, Percussion, Conductor – Jim Tomlinson Vibraphone, Percussion – Adrian Bending Viola – Chian Lim, Fiona Bonds, Ian Rathbone, James Boyd, Nick Barr, Reiad Chibah Violin [First] – Amanda Smith, Andrew Storey, George Salter, John Mills, Katie Stillman, Lorraine McAslan, Paul Willey, Richard Milone, Rob Bishop Violin [First], Leader – Martin Burgess Violin [Second, Principal] – Jenny Godson Violin [Second] – Alison Dods, Catherine Morgan, Clare Hayes, Jeremy Morris, Matthew Ward, Richard Blayden, Richard George, Susan Briscoe, Takane Funatsu Vocals – Stacey Kent Vocals [Station Announcement] – Erika Matsuo (tracks: 4)

As cool and sophisticated as crushed ice in a cocktail, as wispy and untroubled as a passing cloud, singer Stacey Kent has carved out a distinctive persona for herself, and stuck with it. Here, she presents the 14th album she has made under her own name - 15th if you count *The Lyric*, released under the name of husband Jim Tomlinson. *I Know I Dream* was recorded with an orchestra arranged by Tommy Laurence and conducted by Tomlinson, who also produced. And who wouldn't love to be able to write sleeve notes as follows: "Thanks to my lyricist Kazuo Ishiguro..." (she mentions a couple of other people as well, but still...)

Throughout all 12 tracks the mood never varies. The dreamy strings are perfect for a voice so light and honeyed that it sounds as if it's been strained through muslin and perfumed with roses tended by nuns. Kent is almost hallucinogenically calm. You feel that the roof could cave in, and

she would merely offer up a seraphic smile and carry on sipping her sencha green tea.

And I have to say, I love it. There is a place for music like this, and it isn't just when you want music to soothe your hangover, or to take the place of Valium. True, it works as better as background than foreground. But you don't always want the vibe to be angsty or shouty. Example: Make It Up – "I love you and you love me... with you it's all so easy... so let's just keep on flying with our heads up in the clouds." Hear hear! Let's forget Trump and Kim Jong-Un, let's forget Brexit and Boris Johnson. As Ishiguro puts it in The Changing Lights: "We laughed about the hopelessness of so many people's lives..." More champagne, please, waiter.

Some of the song lyrics are in French or Portuguese, and my linguistic skills aren't quite up to translating them. But they sound just as serene as the ones in English. Particular favourites include the openers Jobim's Double Rainbow and Photograph. The title track is great too.

If I had one tiny reservation, it would be about the sheer prolixity of some of the lyrics. True, we want to hear Stacey sing, but it's hard to understand why there are just so many words. Bullet Train is perhaps the most egregious example: they're on this train, you see, and typically, Stacey has no idea where they are or where they're going, but on they go, and on, and on, like a dream you can't wake up from. --- Peter Jones, londonjazznews.com

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