

'What you cannot say I will say for you'

Gather Love, Elizabeth S. (CD, Klangalerie)

Gather Love, the debut solo CD by Elizabeth S., is a startling and intense album, centred on the voice, but surrounded by textures, treatments and sonic landscapes as much as any musical accompaniment.

Other reviewers have mentioned several names in comparison, but the only one I can see that is relevant is Laurie Anderson, more for her layers and loops than any vocal similarities. Diamanda Galas might be another point of reference, simply based on the dark mood which seems to inform the music and packaging, but Elizabeth S is very much an original.

Imagine traditional folk reinvented, imagine overhearing musical fragments blown towards you on the wind from a distant festival or celebration, imagine echoes and overlays, imagine what storm clouds parting for the sun sound like, as distant thunder fades away. This is what *Gather Love* sounds like to me.

Each time I play it I discover more to listen to. And each time the chill lessens and I warm to the emotional stories contained within each song: 'Come my love & we shall wander, all of life to see & know' declares the narrator of 'Wanderlove', whilst the singer of 'No Rain' declares 'You will be anger / I shall be peace'. This music is rooted in the earth, it is music 'to remind to retrace to think of now to capture to leave to look' ('To'), but also a reminder that we must 'let the soil dance, let the soil sing'.

This music is litany, magical incantation, heartfelt voice and pagan hymn. It is love and life, confusion and clarity, dark and light, made liquid. It harkens back to murder ballads and folk tales, but takes on board ambient music and the sonic experiments of isolationism and musique concrète, along with the possibilities of the contemporary music studio, to present an original, unnerving and engaging sound.

'I shall not move / from being me' sings Elizabeth S. on 'Measured Greed'. I for one hope she persists in being her unique musical self.

Rupert Loydell