



Pure Pleasure BST 50161

Stacey Kent: Breakfast On The Morning Tram

Format: 2LPs 33rpm / gatefold sleeve

Manufacturer: Pure Pleasure

Release date: 25.05.2012

Stacey Kent is what men used to call a classy broad. Her elegant fashion sense and understated vocal style make her sound like a woman from another time, an unflappable sophisticate with a warm, slightly world-weary persona. She was born in the United States but after a trip to France, she decided to become a jazz singer. In the early '90s she landed in Oxford where she met her husband, musical director/sax player Jim Tomlinson. Tomlinson also produces Kent's albums, and this time out, he composed several charming tunes that sound like potential standards, plus collaborations with lyricist Kazuo Ishiguro, author of "Remains Of The Day". Original tunes like "The Ice Hotel" and "I Wish I Could Go Traveling Again" are full of wry humor, and Kent delivers them with her usual effortless grace. "The Ice Hotel" is a samba that talks of forsaking the tropics for a room that keeps the temperature at a »steady five degrees«. The ambivalent lyric is perfectly suited for Kent's unassuming style. Is she chiding a lover for his detached demeanor or promising a passionate night that will raise the temperature and put a sizzle in the air? It's hard to tell, and with the music is as warm as the lyric is cool, the tune has a delicious tension. "I Wish I Could Go Traveling Again" sounds like the kind of tune Noël Coward used to write, full of urbane humor and references to »overpriced hotels devoid of charm«. Its melancholy meditation on lost love is enhanced by John Parricelli's rippling guitar and Graham Harvey's subtle bluesy piano. Kent slows down "What A Wonderful World" making it sound more blue than celebratory. Her wistful phrasing imbues the song with a painful melancholy. On "Hard Hearted Hanna", Tomlinson supplies a brief, breezy solo while Kent sounds sly and impudent, playing up the lyric's over the top humor. "Ces Petits Reins", a Serge Gainsbourg tune, benefits from a percussive arrangement featuring bongos, muted guitar notes, and drummer Matt Skelton's brush work; Kent drops in brief faux trumpet accents. Kent's band provides subtle support throughout. Each player steps out for brief impressive solos, but mainly they lay back and support their boss' unobtrusive style.

Recording: March & April 2007 at Curtis Schwartz Studios, Ardingly (England), by Curtis Schwartz

Production: Jim Tomlinson "Stacey Kent: Breakfast On The Morning Tram" - Stacey Kent (voc); Jim Tomlinson (ts, as, ss, fl); John Parricelli (g); Graham Harvey (p, el-p); Dave Chamberlain (b); Matt Skelton (dr, perc)

