

Katriona Taylor – Daring Dreams

MUSIC REVIEWS



Jer@SBS

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Katriona Taylor – *Daring Dreams* – Album Review

When we were introduced to Katriona Taylor's music here on our pages and in our speakers back in 2022 through a review of her album *Blind Passion*, she'd just recorded what was her fifth album, and returned to the scene after twelve years away. And would ya look here...she's already up on our pages again, without even a full year passing between the last album and this one, so I'd say it's safe to say that she's back in action, doing what she loves full-steam ahead again. You hear that remarkable hit of instrumentation and musicianship on display as "You Came Into My Life" opens up her new record *Daring Dreams*, and you can certainly appreciate why she can't stay away! Katriona plays with a whole array of exceptional talents, many of which we'll introduce ya to along the way as we cycle on through this lineup of ten tunes. Like how about Vasilis Xenopoulos and his remarkable saxophone work on this very first track for example? Or what about the exceptional talents of Dave Jones on the bass? Like I was tellin' ya from the get-go...Katriona's not only stunningly talented herself, she's playing with an entire band filled with studio aces and seasoned veterans of the game that have impeccable skillsets. "You Came Into My Life" gets the album goin' with a good gust of energy, robust and vibrant melody, and a great mix of R&B/Pop/Soul that borrows a lot of its demeanor from the 80s on-forward, with a sound that proves to be still completely relevant for today. Solid start for Katriona's new record for sure – *Daring Dreams* arrives officially this April, with a new set-list of songs all entirely composed by Taylor.

Dialing things back to just Robin Banerjee's guitar on "Angel" and Peter Hammond backing him up with some electric piano for ya – this second tune ends up with a much more gentle direction and keeps things simple. Slowly introducing the rhythm section, they play so subtly that many folks probably wouldn't even notice they're there. All pieces of what she writes into her music are essential to the final results, and you don't need me to be the person to tell you what your ears will readily confirm. "Angel" is a much more delicate tune than the opening track by comparison, even though a large amount of what Katriona creates sits right on the fence of Easy Listening/Adult Contemporary already, when she takes her music into slower terrain like this, those genres stand a much better chance of claiming her. Taylor sings this with the full confidence of the professional she's become throughout her years of experience though...no reason not to be happy with how this

turned out. I think there's a little bit of risk involved in taking the energy level down so significantly on track two of a record, but it also depends on what you really want that record to be. Did she make the right call in the final arrangement of the lineup? You'll have to stay tuned to find out here...and of course, you'll find out for yourself this April.

Xenopoulos is endlessly impressive and a remarkable asset to Katriona's music, as further proven through his parts on "Truly Love You." This third track was definitely an interesting one...it's seems to continually become more engaging the longer it plays for, so if you're into it right from the get-go, hang on tight because it only gets better with each ticking second. It's romantic, mysterious, dramatic...there's a whole array of emotions and moods displayed within this one tune, and it makes for a highly compelling listen. Taylor knows how to get the maximum out of herself and the musicians surrounding her, and it's tracks like "Truly Love You" that reveal the consistency of her professionalism. Like a combination of Blues/Jazz/Soul – once you hit that 2:30 mark, you really hear the spark in "Truly Love You" come roaring to life in the hooks, and if anything, it'll make you want a bit of that to occur earlier on as opposed to givin' it to ya through the great reveal & all... but that's the art of songwriting y'all, and we don't always get what we want. You gotta love the backing vocals in this track though – and when "Truly Love You" reaches its peak intensity, it also provides its most memorable highlights.

Those bass-lines from Dave Jones I tell ya...even when things seem like they've slowed down, the man is still kickin' up a storm over there without making anything seem over the top...he plays right in the sweet spot on tracks like "Slow Burn" and it's pretty darn remarkable when it comes down to it. It's all really well-played and tightly controlled stuff overall..."Slow Burn" is probably gonna have to put up a bit more of a fight to get your attention than many of these tracks by comparison, but I can't imagine anyone out there that digs Taylor's music complaining about this either. You can again hear that influence of 80s Pop/Soul into tracks like these... maybe even trace the sound back ever further to the roots of 60s/70s melodies too if you felt so inclined, especially when you consider the theme & mood of a track like this one as well. "*He played it right*" almost sounds like she's directly talkin' about Vasilis or Dave in this tune with how essential their parts become to "Slow Burn" – and Katriona doles out some significant highlights of her own with her sensational vocals as this tune slides on into its third minute. It's a love-song at the end of the day...don't get me wrong, I ain't claiming that Taylor's recreating the wheel here, but she's definitely got things rolling along smoothly through the lineup of *Daring Dreams*.

Love the guitars from Robin and the piano of John Crawford as "Did You Ever Dare To Dream" begins and Katriona starts singing her contemplative questions to us. I like the warm glow the backing vocals add to this tune as well. All-in-all, this track is pretty entirely composed of questions on a lyrical level, ain't it? Unless I'm missing something, I believe that is indeed the case. So ask yourself – "Did You Ever Dare To Dream?" If the answer is no, then hey – your time is NOW! If the answer is yes, then right on, you're ahead of the class and you'll know what Katriona's singing about right from her very first words. I'll concede this to ya...I think there are stellar moments to be found along the way and the highlights you'd more or less expect to find in a Taylor tune...but there's a deeper flow in this track that makes it likely to appeal to a narrower slice of the audience out there. Not the typical kind of hooks I suppose, that's probably what I'm gettin' at. I think she's got lots of potential gateways into it...the vivid imagery of her lyrics in this tune is right on-point, the gentle piano of Crawford hits the mark for sure...lots of positives to be found. If anything, I felt like Katriona might have passed over some of the song's most powerful & alluring hooks almost too quickly, like around the 1:53 mark for example, or at the spot at 3:49 – most every other artist out there would have exploited the living daylights outta those moments, and for Taylor, it's just another piece of a great song. She's got a wealth of ideas at the end of the day, which is great, but even when you hear how this track expands with the backing vocals and whatnot around the 4:10 spot too, you have to wonder if she's left a little on the table when it comes to this particular tune. Lots of opportunity in this track with the hooks it has...they only last mere moments in "Did You Ever Dare To Dream" currently, but they could have potentially been more of a factor overall.

Energy-wise, you can't help but hear the effect that having a little extra has on her performance. Don't get me wrong, Katriona's been as great as I remember her being the last time around – but it's also fair to say that the lineup of tracks on the first half of *Daring Dreams* is very much on the slower side of her sound. You get to the start of the second half with "Making Rain" and you end up quickly identifying the element you've been missing along the way – this is that spark you wanna hear from Taylor's tunes. No doubt that she's stayed consistently professional throughout the course of the record, and no doubt that she writes an effective slow jam too...but when you hear her surging throughout the course of "Making Rain," you can't help but acknowledge how much this whole vibe seems to suit her even more. Like, the vocal hooks, rhythm, and flow you'll find as Katriona kicks this track into gear is insatiably cool. Don't get it twisted, the chorus is rad, the jazzy vocalizations are amazing too – but if you're asking me where the main hooks of this song exist, it's actually in the verses. Obviously that's not always the recipe you wanna employ as an artist or band, but having this happen every now and again can certainly be to your benefit...between the verses and the saxophone solo from Vasilis in the mix here, we're all spoiled for choice as to our favorite moments already, and anything else you love is a pure bonus for ya. I'd be taking a good long look at "Making Rain" as a potential single for this album. Love the bounce of the bass-lines, love the backing vocals, and definitely think it's one of Katriona's strongest performances. She nails it live too – check it out for yourself below!

Makin Rain live performance by Katriona Taylor



As far as memorable moments and sing-along potential is concerned, she's got another solid victory with the chorus of "I Feel Alive" and the sentiment expressed in her lyricism. John's piano gets another significant moment in the spotlight as well, and really takes his solo for a beautiful ride for about a minute in the first half. Katriona approaches the verses with real grace and gentleness...and it works – but if you're asking me where she shines the brightest, it's hands down within the chorus of this track. The finale as well...at least sort of...she's kind of got her finale around the 3:30-4:00 mark on this tune, which gives you a lot of denouement afterwards, but overall, I think she's got a good song here that people will surely respond to. There's a whole lot of positivity in her words and Taylor's empowering spirit shines through as she summons that extra strength to sing the chorus, and she puts in a performance that smartly echoes what the words are telling you. I always preach about doing what the song is calling out for on these pages of ours, and "I Feel Alive" is a perfect example of what I mean. The verses, to be truthful, are alright – I like the words more than anything else really – but hearing the way she expands her energy when hitting the key moments of the chorus was crucial in turning this song from good to great. You can HEAR that she feels alive, you know what I mean? It's an essential aspect to what makes this song work...if she hit that chorus with the same delicate energy of the verses, it wouldn't have nearly the same effect on us. She rises up where the opportunity presents itself in her songwriting on "I Feel Alive," and I felt like Taylor turned this track into a genuinely special moment in time that'll speak directly to the minds, bodies, and souls listening. Great aura and vibes in this song.

I think objectively, she'll have to acknowledge that she's got a bit more of a sleepier sound goin' on overall at the core of this record...tracks like "You Came Into My Life" and "Making Rain" are much more the exceptions and not the rule this time around. Ain't nothing wrong with that of course, it just makes an album like *Daring Dreams* a bit more likely to be put on for certain moods and times in a person's life perhaps more-so than simply every day...but maybe that's just my take on it. I mean, if you dig on quality songwriting and professional execution more than anything else, there'd be no stopping you from putting this album on all the time...but for the average everyday listener out there, it could be seen as a lot more mood-dependent. "Just To Be Near You" would be a track that I'd readily cite as one of the album's undeniable best in terms of performance, tone, structure, and songwriting – and this would be a perfect example of a track that could possibly get lost in the shuffle because there hasn't been quite as much of a shift in the energy throughout the course of this particular album. Dynamics are a key element you always wanna present as much as possible, the whole ebb & flow of an album & whatnot...and without'em really being noticeable, you can end up with what seems almost like one really long tune – make sense? Like I said, Katriona sparks to life on a couple of tunes throughout the course of this lineup...the question is, will those few examples be enough to have gems like "Just To Be Near You" standing out as much as they probably should be? You get to be the judge & jury on all that when *Daring Dreams* gets its release this April...all I can say for certain is that you do not wanna miss out on "Just To Be Near You" – I felt like Katriona put in an award-worthy performance on this song overall. Bonus points for the innovative and melodic solo from Peter Hammond ticklin' the ivories on this track.

Even "Think Of Me" sits more on the fence than she might realize. It's definitely got more energy to it than most of the set-list, but we're probably closer to a mid-tempo for the most part here still, which is admittedly, even harder for the masses to appreciate than a fast or slow tune is generally. The solo in this song as it heads into the second minute of this tune though...is straight-up outta this world y'all. It's almost a track built on an ultimatum of sorts...Taylor's putting her chips in the middle when it comes to betting on love, and now she's lookin' for that ROI, you follow me? Katriona's dreaming out loud on this track without a doubt, and proudly so – she's looking for real love here, and we're all on the side of her finding what she's looking for. "Think Of Me" describes a lot of what we all ponder in the stages of new love as its developing..."what's it gonna be?" ends up being a powerfully accurate hook, questioning aloud what the strength of the intentions of this situation truly are. I felt like there are a lot of things that really went right for Katriona on this particular track...love the flute added in by Vasilis, and the drums from Chris Nickolls are outstanding throughout the versatility of this song's structure for sure. All-in-all, the guy's been nothing but awesome throughout this whole record and quite likely its most unsung hero the entire time – when you think of timing, precision, and passion, thy name by Nickolls. Dude's had a flawless run through this

set-list and continually delivered the professionalism required. There might be more of a push/pull energy & progressive design to this track when it comes right down to it that could make it more challenging for the masses, but there are so many pieces that make it an outstanding experience to listen to, like John's piano solo, and/or how the rhythm section interacts, that make this track impossible to ignore, and another audible triumph when it comes to their performance.

"A Question Of When" examines the aftermath of heartbreak, love, and loss. While much of it can certainly be interpreted as devastating and rightly so – you can also look at this track as an inspired tune that dwells much more on the positive side of the scenario. It's not a question of if, it's "A Question Of When" – you following? Katriona will find that love she's lookin' for, and she knows that...and like the rest of us out here on this planet, she can certainly hope that next experience with love is more stable, lasting, and perhaps even permanent. You could also look at this last track as one written from the perspective of loving from afar, or things not happening at the right time...which is also a real possibility when it comes to life & love. Sometimes we wanna be with someone, but we've got some repairing and healing to do before we can love that person like we should be able to...and that's very much like what it sounds like Katriona is going through on "A Question Of When" – a moment of mending and self-care that is necessary before that next step back into relationships & such. It's a beautifully written tune, with a wonderful performance to go with it that includes some of her best from the lead to the backing vocals..."A Question Of When" is a strong tune from concept to performance, and a great note to go out on. Katriona Taylor is ever the professional, and *Daring Dreams* definitely proves that once again, 100%.

Make sure to find out more about Katriona Taylor at her official pages below!

Main Site: <https://www.katrionataylor.com>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtu1I7Z4CLZIoYjTW9IsLQQ>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/katriona.taylor.5>

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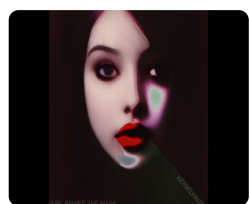
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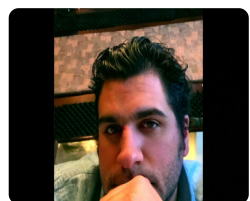
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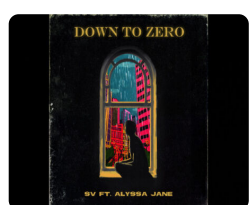
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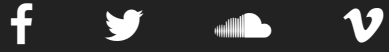


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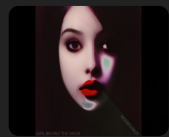
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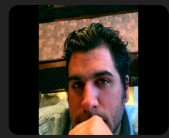
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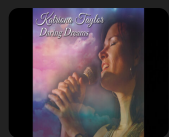
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