

Maura Hagan. *Comin' Around*. www.maurahagan.com

This album was recorded and produced in Newfoundland where Maura Hagan, originally from Scotland, made her home until recently. According to her website, she now lives in Edmonton and is thinking of recording another CD which will have a more “acoustic folk sound” than this one, which Maura calls “blended Celtic & pop.” I am not sure how Celtic this album is – personally I think the term is applied almost willy-nilly to recordings that happen to use the odd ‘Celtic’ instrument here and there. I would consider “Comin’ Around” fits better into the Pop-Country category.

The CD repertoire is entirely made up of covers of other songwriters’ works. The producer of the CD, Dave Fitzpatrick, wrote three of the ten tracks, as well as providing the greatest variety of instrumental accompaniment to Maura’s lyrical singing. Other tracks include Dougie MacLean’s “Caledonia”, Andy M. Stewart’s “Where Are You”, and Ron Hynes “Atlantic Blue”, to name a few. Almost all of the songs Maura has chosen to record here seem to be rehashing the same theme: love and / or relationships.

When I listen to an artist, I look for songs that have messages that provoke or have engaging stories. Most of this CD’s material was of a sameness; making the album excellent if used as background music, but not inspiring enough for me to simply sit and listen. One track and one only stood out for me; the only that had any meat on it. “Steady As She Goes”, written and composed by Brian McNeill, was also a song about a relationship; but this one differed from the rest because it was about a woman abused by her spouse. Maura sang this with thoughtfulness, depth and great feeling. It is by far the most poignant and provocative piece on the album.

Maura Hagan is certainly a very skilled singer. Rita MacNeil called her “a world class singer,” which I do not dispute. As a singer myself, I appreciate any female vocalist who does not over decorate her singing, whose diction is clear, and who knows how to make the best use of her vocal skills. The production of this recording is also very good. All the tracks were very well arranged, featuring six instrumentalists (including the aforementioned producer). I particularly enjoyed the whistle accompaniment of Freddie Jorgensen. If you are looking for a CD full of basically routine relationship songs that plays well in the background while you are doing other things, then “Comin’ Around” is for you.

Maira Cameron, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories