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Music Review: Bonnie Ste-Croix - Canadian Girl

August 27, 2011 11:13 PM

Major moves can trigger lots of changes. When you're pulling up stakes and changing homes, cities, even coasts, other life changes tend to get tossed in the mix as well. And, some big ideas can pop into your head as well. That's what happened to Bonnie Ste-Croix last year when she found herself moving from Vancouver all the way to Halifax. She decided to be closer to her mother, who was not well. Ste-Croix had grown up in Gaspé, so it was sort of a homecoming, the right ocean anyway. Thinking about all the provinces she'd cross to get there inspired a unique idea.



Ste-Croix decided to make a trip cross-country and do what she does best: Make music at every stop. To this end, she planned a tour that took her to each province and territory, to play shows, but also to record. In 13 stops, she recorded 13 tracks, with special guest from each location, friends from the folk music community. You'll know lots of the names; Catherine MacLellan was there in PEI, Natalie MacMaster for Nova Scotia, The Once in Newfoundland, etc. Here in N.B., it was a bilingual date, with Jessica Rhaye joining on vocals, Dominique Dupuis on fiddle, as well as Aaron Currie on guitar. They recorded a track called Theo, a good one, and like all the tracks, composed by Ste-Croix. The songs weren't specifically about each area, thank

goodness, that's too difficult and would have resulted in bad travelogue ads no doubt. The highlight of this number is the fine vocal blend between Rhaye and Ste-Croix.

Ste-Croix calls the process the adventure of a lifetime, and I think she's actually hit on something here. Concept discs, whether they are tributes or charity efforts or thematic adventures, tend to fall flat in the hype, or the forced performances between disparate colleagues. Here Ste-Croix hasn't tried to write-to-order per province, or record with the biggest names. Instead, she's taken the songs she already had, and played with people she liked and wanted to, who properly fit the roles and material. Plus, the songs are of strong quality throughout. In the end, it turns out to be a high-quality celebration of the folk-and-roots community of the country.

Okay, there's one song that was written-to-order about Canada and home and such, but since it's also the best on the album, it deserves singular praise. Canadian Girl gives the album its title, and here represents her new Nova Scotia home, also gives us the great statement of the project. Ste-Croix now sees the whole country as her home, having gone from small towns to big cities, to all three coasts, and become familiar with just about every stop between. That's a thought right up there with "Something to sing about, this land of ours."

Fittingly, Ste-Croix is launching the disc with a cross-Canada tour, starting with:

September 17 - The Company House, Halifax, NS with guest Dylan Guthro

September 22 - Best Western Manoir Adelaide, Dalhousie, NB

September 24 - La Petite Eglise, Gaspé, QC

October 6 - Centre Ambroise, Montreal, QC with guest Dale Boyle

October 7 - The Rainbow Bistro, Ottawa, ON

October 8 - The Spill, Peterborough, ON

October 9 - Acoustic Grill, Picton, ON

October 11 - L-Lounge, Kitchener, ON

October 12 - London Music Club, ON

October 13 - Bohemian Fridays, Dunnville, ON

October 14 and 15 - OCF, Niagara Falls ON

October 16 - The Pearl Company, Hamilton, ON

October 19 - The Moonshine Café, Oakville, ON

October 22 - Pearl Theatre, Lunenburg (with Ken Whitely), NS

October 28 - Vintage Bistro, Hampton, NB

About Bob Mersereau



Bob Mersereau has been covering music, and the East Coast Music Scene since 1985 for CBC. He's a veteran scene-maker at the ECMA's, knows where the best shows and right parties are happening, and more importantly, has survived to tell the tales. His weekly East Coast music column is heard on Shift on Radio 1 in New Brunswick each Wednesday at 4:45. He's also the

author of two national best-selling books, *The Top 100 Canadian Albums* (2007) and *The Top 100 Canadian Singles* (2010).

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