

Clela Errington sings up a river

Beach singer/songwriter Clela Errington's first CD, *Lace Curtains*, introduced a fresh and confident voice to the music scene in this area. Clela's laidback debut presented evidence that flash and hype are not required to showcase new talent – that quiet elegance can be even more ear-catching.

Errington's latest release, *In The Eddy*, continues in that vein, albeit this time with a deeper purpose in the artist's mind. The liner notes of *In The Eddy* explain that the CD is Clela's "homage to the St. Lawrence River, the Thousand Islands, the wind and the water that gets in your blood." The songs definitely have a "river" theme, including the title track on which Errington displays her superb harmonica playing in a gently flowing, slightly Latin-flavoured instrumental. Another original, 'The River', flowing almost seamlessly from 'In the Eddy', plays with a cabaret-style sadness and equates the river with a place of safe haven.

This time, though, Errington risks taking a few canoe strokes away from the safe haven of her "eddy" out into the faster waters of jazz. The bio material that accompanied the CD said that she has had formal jazz vocal training, and her performance of 'Lullaby of Birdland' shows that she learned well. Hers is a dark, smoky and ever-so-sexy voice that holds key well (there's an old joke about how one knows that a jazz singer is at the door: they've lost their key, and don't know when to come in) and is strong enough to carry the lead with only a simple bass and drum accompaniment. The cut is the gem of the CD in my opinion.

Errington's recording of the classic 'Moon River' doesn't work as well though. It's not her singing that threw me off, but rather the style of the accompa-

niment. It's in a strongly defined waltz tempo with basic rhythm group instruments – complete with an annoying electronic shaker sound in the far background – that restricts the capability of Errington's vocals to flow. I know, it's hard to live up to Andy Williams...

Getting back to her country/gospel roots, Errington does a superb rendition of Ralph Stanley's 'The Darkest Hour is Just Before the Dawn'. The guitar work by Steve Briggs is very subtle and tasty, and Errington resists the temptation to include background singers leaving me to fill in my own harmonies.

Speaking about the musicians, Errington uses a different ensemble from the guys on *Lace Curtains*. Briggs and Ed Hutchison on the guitar, John Adams on drums, Doug Felix, who really gets to stretch it out on 'Lullaby...', George Koller on the stand-up bass, and Denis Keldie on mandolin, organ and melitron, etc. make up the support group. Steve Paul Simms, whose tune 'Whenever I Dream' nicely rounds out the collection, provides the few harmony vocals that appear on the CD.

To carry the river metaphor along, *In the Eddy* is another great collection of material by a great performer. Like the river she honours, the CD is an ever-changing, ever-flowing entity, safe and sure on the one hand, slightly dangerous on the other. Errington navigates both faces of the river with the ease and confidence of one who has grown up on – and in – it.

Clela Errington will be opening for the Fiddles & Frets presentation of Alan Rhody this Friday, April 26, at the Bellefair United Church. For ticket information and show times see the Entertainment column this issue (pg. 10) or call 416-264-2235.

By Bill MacLean

CLELA ERRINGTON



IN THE EDDY