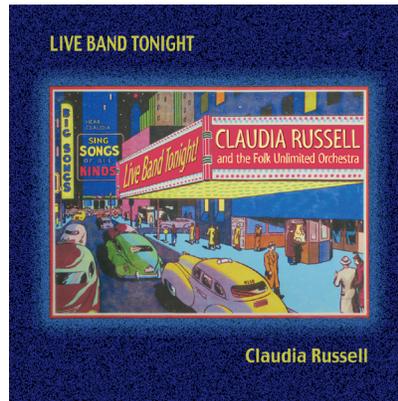


Sing Out!

Fall 2008

Claudia Russell and The Folk Unlimited Orchestra *Live Band Tonight*



“Let’s just say they’re hot.
Connect them to the power
grid and they’d light up
a medium-sized town...
This CD is as musically solid
as they come and in the world
of obligatory live CDs,
Live Band Tonight shines.”

Claudia Russell explored several of the songs on this CD on previous recordings, but she’s a great live performer and this showcase from three venues proves that. The tracks come from live recordings made at Berkeley’s Freight and Salvage, Howard and Roz Larman’s “FolkScene” radio show and “Live From Studio One” at KUNI-FM in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

One of Russell’s noble aspects is that she records great interpretation of covers as well as songs that she has authored and co-written. Thus, *Live Band Tonight* includes songs by Dylan, Jeff Talmadge, Lori B and others. Her band consists of sidekick, Bruce Kaplan (guitar/mandolin), along with Mark Petrella (bass) and Carl Byron (piano/accordion), with Tom Talley (viola), Ted Waterhouse (National Guitar) and Steve Lanza (fiddle).

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The CD ranges from near solos such as Russell’s “White Cross,” to the full tilt boogie of “Tonight I’ll Be Staying Here With You,” and every combination of instruments and sounds in-between. The beauty of this recording is that even with the band fully cranking, it’s basically acoustic music and its never eclipses Russell’s effective voice. The sound is jazzy bluegrass. *Live Band Tonight* proves Russell’s versatility as if there was a doubt, as well as documenting her live vibe.

A few minor quibbles in that there are absolutely no notes with the CD, just a song list with the composers last name and first initial, that doesn’t even list who plays what. And Russell doesn’t need the reverb added to her voice on some of the songs.

One incidental that Russell could not have anticipated when assembling the CD is that the late Howard Larman extras on “Don’t Let Your Deal Go Down.” This CD is as musically solid as they come and in the world of obligatory live CDs, it shines.

— *Rich Warren*

Rich Warren is the host of the nationally syndicated radio show **The Midnight Special**, originating from WFMT in Chicago.