

Liane Carroll – Vocals, piano, Wurlitzer electric piano  
Ian Shaw – Piano (track 12)

London-born vocalist Liane Carroll is a one-off. She is totally individual, and you can identify her from the very first notes of any recording she makes. She sings well and accompanies herself at the piano but she's nothing like a gentle cocktail-bar performer. Even on this album of 14 ballads, her dynamism is evident on nearly every track. Indeed, her singing is so powerful that she sometimes reminds me of a schoolteacher shouting at an unruly group of pupils across a playground.

One result of her forceful delivery is that it can obscure the lyrics, especially as her piano is recorded prominently and her playing is as outspoken as her singing. However, apart from these minor flaws, this is a very enjoyable album, thanks not only to Liane's unique style but also to a well-chosen diversity of material. All the songs are slow, except for the medium-tempo bounce of *All Of Me*, but they vary from the emotion of *All The Way* through the pensive *Solitude* to the innocence of *If I Loved You*. The repertoire includes jazz standards like *Willow Weep For Me*, numbers by such singer-songwriters as Laura Nyro and Tom Waits, and an original composition – *You Can't Slow My Heart Down* – co-written by Liane with Peter Kirtley. This song illustrates Carroll's range: fervour mixed with lyricism, tenderness alongside power. She often intersperses her singing with wordless vocals, which work well because of Liane's obvious passion.

In a world of carbon-copy vocalists, Liane is refreshingly her own person. No wonder she won two BBC jazz awards in quick succession.

Tony Augarde