

bebop spoken here

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I think I'll subtitle this review as ‘A (musical) Love Letter to Clairdee’.” —Lance Liddle

CD Review: Clairdee - A Love Letter to Lena

By **Lance Liddle**

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Although a new name to me, Clairdee has three previous albums to her credit and, on the strength of this tribute to Lena Horne, I guess I'll be checking them out.

When we think of jazz singers, Ella, Billie, Sarah, Anita automatically come to mind. We may pause for a while before we add Lena to the list although she deservedly belongs in that exclusive group. However, she also had pop hits (*Love me or Leave me, A New Fangled Tango* etc.) as well a Hollywood career and, later, success as a cabaret artist and a TV personality all of which may have served to distance her from the jazz audience if not the performers.

Clairdee makes no attempt to sound like Lena - who could? However, she is a distinctive stylist in her own right and, like Lena, very much a civil rights activist.

There are also interludes of quotes from Lena, narrated very effectively by Margo Hall, that add a sense of theatre to the album and, overall, I think it is an album that the lady herself would have given a nod of approval.

Regina Carter guests on *Believe in Yourself* - a track that erupts into a gospel inspired frenzy. The backing trio are solid throughout and the backing vocals add to the ambiance but the star, apart from the legacy of Lena Horne, is Clairdee. A soulful voice, rich and resonant I think I'll subtitle this review as "A (musical) Love Letter to Clairdee"

Old Devil Moon; Home (spoken interlude); *I Got a Name; Maybe; Hollywood* (spoken interlude); *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child; Seminar With Drinks* (spoken interlude); *I Want to be Happy; Soul Mates* (spoken interlude); *Something to Live For; I'm Free* (spoken interlude); *Believe in Yourself; The Movement* (spoken interlude).

Clairdee (vocal); Jon Herbst (piano/keys); Ron Belcher or Doug Miller (bass); Deszon Claiborne or Lance Dresser (drums); John Hoy or Dave Bell (guitar); Mario Guarneri (trumpet); Charles McNeal (tenor sax); Philip Santos (violin); Emily Onderdonk (viola); Paul Hale (cello); Ashling Cole, Bryan Dyer, Zoe Ellis (backing vocals); Tony Lindsay, Janice Maxie-Reid, Kenny Washington (guest vocalists); Regina Carter (violin); Margo Hall (narrator).