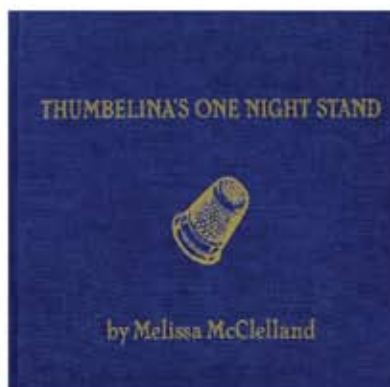




Melissa McClelland "Thumbelina's One Night Stand" (Independent 2006)



Thumbs up for the latest Canadian sensation

Phrases are grabbed from everyday life, situations, predicaments, observations woven into songs, relationship hooks, scraps of feelings made poetic, given dignity, made beautiful. Moments that lives pivot around picked over given simple musical backing, storytelling, communicating, she finds a way to bring characters to life and inhabits them, with even some space for Crazy Horse style guitar. The opposite of the over-blown, the antithesis of the operatic, this is ambition worked within self-imposed boundaries, this is clarity, this is integrity. Songs can shift, patterns can emerge - 'Oh Love' starts as though it is going to be a desert blown twang fest when over the dunes arrives a herd of strings to provide an oasis of politeness, tea and cucumber sandwiches, the tex-mex tortilla forgotten until the final brass flourish.

If you imagine Tom Waits as a female with a good singing voice maybe it'll give you an idea of the narrative power of 'Passenger 24' a song that struts down the street spraying notes like a car gliding through a deep puddle. 'Solitary Life' takes Dido, pushes her face into a bucket and holds it under, a romantic stroll of a tune contrasting with the bitter monologue of a lonely sour life unfurling; she can sure do melancholy. 'You Know I Love You Baby' flexes its musical muscle and her vocals have more power, but underneath runs the current of sadness. Her purist vocal is on 'Goodbye to You' - backed with some pedal steel the song takes its time to reveal its centre, the constant thrum of a stunted guitar riff giving the structure; when it disappears you feel its absence and welcome its return as the song continues on reaching six minutes without me noticing that three had passed.

A couple of polished remixes give glimpse of what she could sound like given the inclination; even surrounded by a richer tapestry her voice is still the thread that stitches everything together but you feel that she works better in miniature where you can hear every pull on the thread. This is going to be a breakthrough record for McClelland - I can't imagine anyone hearing it not being in some way impressed.

Date review added: Friday, October 27, 2006

Reviewer: David Cowling

Reviewers Rating: **7 out of 10**