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CD REVIEWS

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Whispers The Heart

Chris McNulty (Elefant Dreams)

by Andrew Vélez

It's particularly on that '40s Cahn-Stordahl-Weston gem "I Should Care" that Aussie songstress Chris McNulty evokes pleasant memories of Anita O'Day and of Chris Connor's hip cool. McNulty's voice can soar lightly into upper registers like O'Day's and also exudes a kindred innate cheerfulness that never totally disappears whatever the song. It's especially apparent with her upbeat, swinging take on Legrand-Bergman's "Summer Me, Winter Me".

She also makes a very credible dive into "Make It Easy On Yourself", a Bacharach-David bleak survivor's report, on which Frank Wess (tenor sax) and Gary Versace (piano) provide especially solid backing. The set, which is strong on ballads, includes songs of her own such as "Springosphere" and "Lullaby For A Young Boy", reflecting a spirit both contemplative and adventurous musically.

Her interplay with her fellow musicians is a joy, including guitarist Paul Bollenback, who shines on Jobim-Gilbert's "You Never Come To Me". Throughout singer and her cohorts play seamlessly. A Thad Jones-Abbey Lincoln rarity "When Love Was You And Me" closes and caps the set. It's a pindrop-perfect singer and guitarist duet. A remembrance of love past, the nuanced delicacy of their understated approach makes it all the more affecting emotionally.

For more information, visit www.elefantdreams.com.
McNulty is at Sweet Rhythm Oct. 24th. See calendar.