

Cassandra Wilson: A True Vocalist

Jazz vocalist Cassandra Wilson's latest album entitled *Thunderbird* continues her trend of performing older and more eclectic music. She brilliantly showcases her talent of incorporating hip-hop and post- components harmoniously to the mix. This album exudes an aggressive instrumental layering not typical of some of her earlier work. The opening song "Go to Mexico" is the most poignant example of Wilson's innovative experimentation. This is evident in the synthetic sound and Wilson's voice, which is the greatest asset. The selection "Closer to You" is my favorite song on the *Thunderbird* album. Wilson melodically sings these beautiful lyrics "how soft a whisper can get, when you're walking through a crowded space, I hear every word that you say I remember that everyday I get a little bit closer to you" as if her next breath is inconceivable without the connectedness of her love interest. When she holds the note "you," I find myself mesmerized as I cling in anticipation of her next words that will release me from her sultry musical trance.

Wilson sings the blues the way it should be. In the selection "Easy Ride," she begins with a low moan and builds this piece into an explo-

sive weapon. Wilson manages to connect with her listeners by exposing her heart and giving her soul. When she sings "Lost" she personifies the fundamental nature of a true balladeer. Wilson's sultry melodic voice accompanied by the guitar reverberate the essence of sexuality in a tastefully seductive way. One only has to close one's eyes and drift into her hypnotic musical allure. In contrast to her traditional blues style, Wilson introduces a more contemporary blues form in her rendition of "I Want to be Loved." The guitar solo helps Wilson deliver her passionate connection between traditional and contemporary blues. The licks from this beautiful instrument were absolutely amazing. There is an obvious connection between these two instruments—Wilson's vocals and the guitar—an unexplainable phenomena unless one experiences this music personally. Overall, I was extremely impressed with this dynamic artist and the beautiful music she shares with the world in her new album *Thunderbird*.

Janet Thomson