

April 18, 2009

Hello again. We have a number of great new CD's at HPL this month, and one in particular got me thinking about some issues with Pop Music, in general.

Last month's update included the new CD by **Kelly Clarkson** called *All I Ever Wanted*, but as I had not listened to it, I could not include it in my list of recommendations. Well, I've now listened to it over 25 times – seriously – and I have to say it's one of the best pop albums I've heard in a long time. I've always liked Clarkson's music, but none of her previous work was as vibrant or universal as this new collection, or spent anywhere near as much time in heavy rotation on my drives to and from work. But what's most remarkable about this album is what it's not.

Our star-obsessed culture has created an unfortunate style of songwriting that puts a painful twist on the much heralded "introspective" songwriters of the 1970's such as Jackson Browne, Joni Mitchell, etc., leaving us with songs by major artists that are *so* personal and so *clearly* about their own unique life in the spotlight that the lyrics lose any sense of universality and, therefore, a deeper connection with their listeners. This has been a problem with artists as far ranging in styles as Jewel and Britney Spears (a long guilty practitioner of songs about herself – which she doesn't even write – though with terrific beats and production), and it's a testament to Clarkson's goals that she follows a similar production style as many other artists while keeping the quality of her songs on the upper end of the spectrum *and* universally accessible.

With the domination of iTunes and the increasing importance of a strong selling "single," the traditional format of one artist working with one producer (think the Beatles & George Martin or even Shania Twain & Mutt Lange) is on the downswing. While the solo-producer approach usually results in a more consistent style and quality of sound, the "single" approach – the desire to have a few big songs that will carry album sales – enlists multiple producers and songwriters to create a kind of jukebox effect where the only consistency may be the person singing the song. For those of us accustomed to enjoying all the tracks on an album, the single approach can create a problem. Far too often the first half of the record is loaded with up-tempo tracks hoping to be hits, while the second half is filled with ballads or, as it often sounds, just a few more songs to fill out the disc. Clarkson's album, however, is sequenced perfectly, balancing not just the rockers and the ballads, but the lyrical content as well: the "sad" songs come after a couple "confident" songs, etc. Her album is also filled with musical quotes and references, ranging from Squeeze, Paul Simon, a nod to the retro-style of Amy Winehouse, and even a surprise appearance from The Sweet's "Ballroom Blitz," no less.

I know everyone loves the music they do for very personal reasons, and I know that contemporary pop music is not everyone's cup of proverbial tea, but I truly love this record, and for someone who spends a lot of time listening to Miles Davis, Loudon Wainwright III, and Miles Davis (did I mention him already?), that's got to count for something. This is another one of those "roll the windows down and turn it up" kind of records, so take a chance.

Now that that's out of the way, I need to mention a wonderful new French album by **Vanessa Paradis** called *Divinidylle*, a new **Diana Krall**, new albums by both **Branford** and **Wynton Marsalis**, some very interesting unreleased gems by **Buddy Holly** and **Hank Williams**, and lots of other goodies for the musically adventurous. As always, I hope you find a few new favorites, and thanks for your indulgence.

Be well,

Peter Thornell  
Reference Dept.  
Hingham Public Library  
781-741-1405 x2609  
[thornell@ocln.org](mailto:thornell@ocln.org)

Artist	Title
<b>Amadou &amp; Mariam</b>	<b>Welcome to Mali</b>
Autograph	Sign in Please
Bad Plus	For All I Care
<b>Basia</b>	<b>It's That Girl Again</b>
Black N Blue	Ultimate Collection
Bottesini / LSO	Concertino in C Minor; Duo Concertante from Bellini
<b>Botti, Chris</b>	<b>Chris Botti in Boston</b>
Brown, Alison	The Company You Keep
Bruch / Lso	Symphonies; Concerto for 2
Cale, J.J.	Roll on
Carpenter, Mary Chapin	Come Darkness, Come Light: Twelve Songs of Christmas
Chang, Han-Na	Vivaldi: Cello Concertos
Clapton, Eric	Slowhand
<b>Clarkson, Kelly</b>	<b>All I Ever Wanted</b>
<b>Cohen, Leonard</b>	<b>Live in London</b>
Collins, Phil	But Seriously
Collins, Phil	Hits
<b>Coltrane, John</b>	<b>John Coltrane Quartet Plays</b>
<b>Coltrane, John</b>	<b>Meditations</b>
<b>Copeland, Shemekia</b>	<b>Never Going Back</b>
Crowell, Rodney	Sex and Gasoline
Decemberists	Hazards of Love
Domingo, Placido	Amore Infinito
Dylan, Bob	Before the Flood
Fitzgerald, Ella	Pure Ella: The Very Best of Ella Fitzgerald
Flamin' Groovies	Flamingo/Teenage Head
<b>Fleetwood, Mick</b>	<b>Blue Again!</b>
<b>Foster, Sutton</b>	<b>Wish</b>
Genesis	Seconds Out
<b>Goldmark, Karoly</b>	<b>Rustic Wedding Symphony</b>
Gorecki, Henri	Symphony No. 3 "Symphony of Sorrowful Songs"
Hassell, Jon [Trumpet]	Last Night the Moon Came Dropping its Clothes in the Street
<b>Holly, Buddy</b>	<b>Down the Line: Rarities</b>
Ibrahim, Abdullah	Senzo
<b>Indigo Girls</b>	<b>Poseidon and the Bitter Bug</b>
<b>Isbin, Sharon</b>	<b>Journey to the New World</b>
<b>Krall, Diana</b>	<b>Quiet Nights</b>
<b>Marsalis, Branford</b>	<b>Metamorphosen</b>
<b>Marsalis, Wynton</b>	<b>He and She</b>
Martin, Frank	Mass for Double Choir
Martinu / Hickox	Symphony No. 4; Concertos
McBride, Martina	Shine
McCartney, Jesse	Departure
<b>McClurkin, Donnie</b>	<b>Live in Detroit</b>
Morrison, Van	Astral Weeks: Live at the Hollywood Bowl
Nelson, Willie	Naked Willie
Oasis	Definitely Maybe
<b>Paradis, Vanessa</b>	<b>Divinidylle</b>

<b>Penguin Cafe Orchestra</b>	<b>Penguin Cafe Orchestra</b>
<b>Peyroux, Madeleine</b>	<b>Bare Bones</b>
Proclaimers	The Best of...
Proclaimers	Life with You
Rahman, A R	The Best of A R Rahman
Raitt, Bonnie	Longing in Their Hearts
Raitt, Bonnie	Nick of Time
<b>Raitt, Bonnie</b>	<b>Bonnie Raitt</b>
<b>Raitt, Bonnie</b>	<b>Streetlights</b>
<b>Return to Forever</b>	<b>Returns</b>
Shostakovich, Dmitri	Symphony No. 10; Veljo Tormis: Overture No. 2
<b>Simmons, Jade</b>	<b>Revolutionary Rhythm</b>
Soundtrack	Shrek: The Musical
Soundtrack	Hannah Montana: The Movie
<b>Soundtrack</b>	<b>Coraline</b>
Soundtrack	Sunshine Cleaning
Strawbs	Nomadness
Sugarland	Enjoy the Ride
Thin Lizzy	Still Dangerous: Live at Tower Theatre Philadelphia 1977
Thomas, B.J.	Greatest Hits
<b>Various artists</b>	<b>War Child Presents Heroes</b>
Various artists	Gold: '80s British
<b>Various artists</b>	<b>The Very Best of Prestige: Prestige 60th Anniversary</b>
<b>Various artists</b>	<b>Putumayo Presents: India</b>
<b>Various artists</b>	<b>Putumayo Presents: Salsa</b>
Various artists	Now, Vol. 30
Various artists	Now That's What I Call Power Ballads
Ward, M.	Hold Time
Watkins, Sara	Sara Watkins
<b>Williams, Hank</b>	<b>The Unreleased Recordings: Gospel Keepsakes</b>
<b>Williams, Hank</b>	<b>The Unreleased Recordings</b>
<b>Xenakis / Schick</b>	<b>Iannis Xenakis: Percussion Works</b>
Yanni	Voices
Yoga World	Stretch