

Maverick Magazine



"1970 songbird releases fine concert double disc; stirring up memories of lost youth and great songs"

(four stars)

Californian singer-songwriter Karla Bonoff cut her teeth back in the early '70s with the band Bryndle. This legendary outfit included high school friends, and future notables; Andrew Gold, Kenny Edwards and Wendy Waldman. Although their debut album didn't see the light of day Edwards and Gold later became key players in Linda Ronstadt's band, while Waldman established a successful solo career.

Karla Bonoff's 1977 debut, *Karla Bonoff* released by CBS, was an immediate critical success. Containing brilliant self-written songs like *Home* and *Someone To Lay Down Beside Me*, Karla's songs and beautiful voice heralded the arrival of a major talent. Her profile was further raised when Linda Ronstadt and Bonnie Raitt chose to cover her songs. Karla toured with the likes of James Taylor and John David Souther releasing three more solo albums, the last being *New World* back in 1988. She has continued to write, and perform live, while the reformed Bryndle belatedly issued two CDs in the mid 1990s.

This self-released package contains a 2004 concert recorded on home turf in Santa Barbara. Karla is supported by a sympathetic band who don't steamroll her. but let the music breath through.

The players are old pal Kenny Edwards on bass, guitar, cello and mandolin and vocals, Scott Babcock; drums and vocals and Nina Gerber on guitar. The first thing that will strike the listener is how well Ms. Bonoff voice has survived the years, Karla sounds like a wise 25 year old. The old chestnuts are here; *I Can't Hold On*, *Home* and *If He's Ever Near* form a nostalgic trio of songs that begin the set in superb fashion. These songs have retained their power and more. The newer Bryndle songs; *Like a Compass* and *Daddy's Little Girl* favourably match up to her solo material.

Most of Karla's gems are featured here; *All My Life*, kicking off Disc 2, sounds as poignant as ever while *Someone to Lay Down Beside Me* remains a classic. The traditional *The Water is Wide* closes the concert beautifully; Karla informing the audience that she learned to play the song as a teenager. The 'new' *What About Joanne* examines the effects of adultery. It features a strong melody and superb musicianship. A word too for Nina Gerber; she's a wonderful guitarist having played so beautifully on record with the late Kate Wolf. It would appear Karla's music provides a perfect vehicle for her talents.

Karla Bonoff isn't a prolific writer, she usually whittles a handful of songs every year. It is a pleasure to hear from her after so long; I'm sure there is an audience out there who would snap up a new collection. In the meantime this live set feels like a precious gift from a lost friend.