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Walk With Me by morgaga

A polished gem with innumerable facets, Jewel Kilcher shines brightly as one of the few reigning artistes that has reached out and inspired her fans with diverse lyrical tunes reflecting several of humanity's condition.

Her simple but poignant tunes on the fatalism of human stereotyping, the simple joy of a loved one's company and the quiet strength of children in her debut 'Pieces of you' warmed us to her yodeling and agrarian style. She went on to rouse our souls in 'Spirit' and meditated on the fragile beauty of innocence and the powerful ache of waiting for a loved one's return. With 'This Way', Jewel has gone from strength to strength and set another melodic milestone in her inspired life.

Always dubbed an ice princess because of her origins from Alaska, Jewel led far from a royal life. Her childhood was spent in a home with no electricity and running water. She had to overcome being dyslexic when young and having to live in the back of her van when times were bad. Instead of whining, the winsome kid grew up quickly appreciating the beauty of nature and focused on maintaining the strength of character that came from the pillar that is her family.

After getting her break at a small-time coffee-joint singing *a la Phoebe*, she got discovered and was signed on by Atlantic Records. With the furor caused by 'Pieces of you' with its plain but powerful messages and refreshing tunes, Jewel's baby step was a giant leap. If 'Pieces of you' was more about appreciating the beauty of life, 'Spirit' was definitely ambrosia to the soul. Her sophomore effort saw her working with Patrick Leonard and their collaboration came up with a more refined and layered album.

After a total of 23 million sales from 3 albums, 2 successful books and even an acclaimed turn as an actress in a movie, Jewel has finally come full circle by becoming co-producer with Dann Huff on several of the tracks in the new effort 'This Way'.

'This Way' features new original-penned tracks that bring out more of Jewel's quiet wisdom and stalwart truths in a gutsy manner. The whole album is washed with a backdrop of Nashville influence but at the same time that same influence does not impose itself into any of the songs. The oft-heard radio choice 'Standing Still' introduces the listener to the elegant balance of folk and rock in much of Jewel's songs. In truth, if one is to label Jewel's music, which in itself should be a crime, one might use 'American Soundscape' to represent her scope. Her finesse in handling both soaring personal ballads and anthems of human hope is a rare talent in the industry and top-notch gurus in the music business have rained the petite pixie with lavish praises.

'She's one of the most richly idiomatic female pop singers of her generation,'" writes Rolling Stone's critic James Hunter. Respected producer Dan Huff contributes, "I think, in this day and age, when there's so much cookie-cutter stuff going on, she's her own deal." He adds, "I think the word 'artist' is overused in the entertainment community. There are a lot of entertainers and musicians, but when you say artist, I think she is an artist. I think that would be my highest compliment – she's an artist." And co-writer Rick Nowels chips in by saying, "She's a real true blue poet. She has a completely solid point-of-view, and her poetic voice is completely intact. She didn't have to search for lyrics, they came right to her."

Having achieved so much distinct recognition for her body of work, Jewel approaches her prodigal appraisals with much humility and a beguiling simplicity in her approach. "I don't want to look back on my music the way you look back in high school, when you had poofy hair," Jewel laughs. "I'll always be curious musically and want to try new things, but above all, I want the music to sound honest and good in 20 years."

It looks like Jewel's train has stayed right on track. 'This Way' presents a rainbow of prime selections including a new whimsical sonnet 'Break Me', a thinly-disguised, playful and political 'Jesus Loves You', the anthem-like and rousing title track 'This Way' and the energetic, potent 'Love Me, Just Leave Me Alone'.

For those who enjoy the quality of Jewel's voice in 'live' mode, you'll be glad to find the last 2 tracks more than enough to satiate your hunger for her textured vocals. The notional musings in 'Grey Matter' and the playful wisdom in 'Sometimes It Be That Way' concludes the album with much aplomb as the 2 songs serve to reveal another side of Jewel's expert treatment in her performances and all things musical.

With stirring strings and dancing piano chords, poetically sonorous thoughts and vividly rousing arrangements, one can be sure that Jewel is definitely travelling the right way.

www.jeweljk.com

www.foolishgames.com

www.smoe.org/lists/jewel/angels/

www.highergroundhumanity.org (Charity organisation started by Jewel)