



In Extremis

Clotilde Rullaud

Tzig'art - TZIG 141261

Available from [Clotilde Rullaud's Bandcamp page](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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One of the advantages of listening to foreign-tongued singers is the ability to regard the human voice more centrally as an instrument; after all, if the lyrics don't capture a portion of your mind in contemplation of a message, then you have all that more cerebral a space to devote to the sonics. That's at first the case with Clotilde Rullaud's *In Extremis*. However, her style can oft be conversationally smooth, then abstract, then free and interwoven with a rather impressive accompaniment, a three-piece ensemble providing a strikingly chamber-orchestral effusion in the classically slanted *African Sketches after Afro Blue* and again in its follower *O Canto De Ossanha / L'eau À La Bouche*, baroquely neoclassical by way of Brazil.

The ever-increasingly noteworthy Olivier Hutman, whose powers and elegance have increased yearly since his debut in the '75 group Freefall, nominally fronts the threesome (Rullaud plays some flute here and there, so you can call it a sometime instrumental foursome if you wish) and proves as supple here as in more staid and traditional venues, while Dano Haider's a superb guitarist meshing beautifully with Hutman and drummer Antoine Paganotti. When Hutman lays back into rhythm duties, he and Paganotti harmonize marvelously, creating a backdrop for Rullaud to do as she pleases. And when Haider steps out, as he does liberally in *La Bahiana*, fingers skipping nimbly over the fretboard and as playfully and gracefully as Rullaud's constantly shifting voice, the sense of élan is liquid and energetic.

Clotilde in fact slips in quite a bit that will escape the listener who isn't attentive—not including, of course, that quote from Nirvana, which is sudden, noticeable, and surprising. You can't luxuriate only in her frequent scatty lead lines dancing, pirouetting, and bouncing atop Hutman's piano, especially in Sting's *Fragile* (with great chords alternatingly held just right and then chopped up by Olivier), because to do so would be to miss myriad more subtle innovations. And there's just as much romance in Monk's *Ugly Beauty* as in Evans' *Waltz for Debby* here, not to mention a good deal of cinematic atmosphere, but the tension between Rullaud's disciplined but free-spirited enchanting and the band's exquisite settings is the real attraction and lies far more in the aesthetic than the entertaining. There may even be a clue to why that is in the reverse liner quote from Emmanuel Delattre, but je ne parle pas le langue de belle France, so we'll just have to satisfy ourselves with the music. And that's more than enough.

Track List:

- Waltz For Debby (Bill Evans) / La Noyée (Serge Gainsbourg)
- African Sketches After Afro Blue (Santamaria / Rullaud / Delattre)
- O Canto De Ossanha (Baden Powell) / L'eau À La Bouche (de Moraes / Gainsbourg)
- This Is It (Hutman / Rullaud)
- La Bahiana (Haider / Delattre)
- Fragile (Sting)
- Ugly Beauty (Monk / Ferro)
- Oblivion (Astor Piazzola) / Deux Coeurs Perdus (Laya / Rullaud)
- The Walk After Pie Jesu From Maurice Durufé (Durufé / O'Doherty / Rullaud)

Edited by: David H. Pyles
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