

LEDISI: Lost And Found (Label: Verve Forecast)

Written by Bill Buckley

Friday, 19 October 2007 08:05



The soul cognoscenti have known about this Oakland-based singer/songwriter since 2001 when her jaw-droppingly good debut album - a compelling meld of neo-soul vibes, contemporary urban jams and a subtle but telling soupcon of jazz - slipped out on small indie label, Le Sun Music. That album, 'Soulsinger,' heralded the arrival of a supremely talented performer who not only had a fabulous voice but could write a decent tune and pen intelligent lyrics. After the jazz-oriented follow-up, 'Feeling Orange But Sometimes Blue,' a year later, Ledisi fell off the radar for a while until she surfaced on the Luther Vandross homage, 'Forever, For Always For Luther.' Recently heard on another multi-artist compilation ('We All Love Ella'), the diminutive powerhouse chanteuse now has the backing of a major label and with it an important opportunity to reach a wider audience and shake off 'soul music's best kept secret' tag. Three long years in gestation, 'Lost & Found' is a superlative showcase for Ledisi Young's extraordinary talent. There are so many highlights that it's hard to cherry pick favourites. 'Get To Know You' is a slinky mid-tempo affair while the funky Chaka-esque 'Upside Down' combines jazz scatting with a driving, danceable backbeat. 'In The Morning' is a sultry slow jam for the wee-small hours, as is the poignant title track, where Ledisi's plaintive voice is counterpointed by a solo violin over a bare piano accompaniment. With any luck this scintillating album should give Ledisi the breakthrough her talent deserves and transform her into a household name. Fingers crossed then.

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