

ROXANNE POTVIN FOR DREAMING

“Can’t stop a bird from singing / Can’t blame a girl for dreaming”

Those words echo throughout Roxanne Potvin’s latest album, a highly personal and deeply affecting return for the Montreal-based singer/songwriter and guitarist after a five-year break from recording. It was a period of experimentation and study for Potvin, resulting in *For Dreaming* building upon the quiet intensity displayed on several tracks from her 2011 album *Play*.

The time away not only served to rekindle Potvin’s creative fire, it also motivated her to fully embrace the challenge of making a record on her own, something she hadn’t done since taking her first steps into the music business. After two years of formal training in sound engineering and working as a studio assistant, Potvin decided to record a new album in 2015, not knowing this would lead her to producing most of it herself. The tipping point actually came in late 2014 with an invitation to take part in Canadian Pacific’s Holiday Train from Montreal to Calgary, where she was teamed up with Vancouver power pop legends the Odds. The experience reconnected her with the sheer fun of performing, the final piece of the puzzle she had been missing.

“When I came back in January, I started furiously writing,” Potvin says. “Then I booked a solo tour of western Canada for the spring, and it felt like I was all-in all over again. It’s pretty amazing when you make that decision. You start putting that energy out there, and it kind of comes back to you. It was a very interesting year.”

Sessions got underway at Little Bullhorn Studio in Ottawa after an entire summer spent writing, where Potvin’s longtime bassist Mark McIntyre and Timber Timbre drummer Olivier Fairfield laid down basic tracks with producer and engineer Dave Draves. From there, Potvin took the reins and finished *For Dreaming* at her home in Montreal, with contributions from Christine Bougie on guitar and lap steel, Chris Gestrin on organ, and harp and woodwinds supplied by local musicians and arranged by Montreal songwriter and arranger Antoine Gratton.

Potvin admits it was the most challenging and frightening experience she’s had in her career to this point. But it was the most satisfying experience as well, she adds, being able to work at home with plenty of time to write and record her parts (she plays guitar, piano, synth, percussions and accordion on the album). The intimacy imbued in songs such as “I Thought I’d Miss You” and “In Your Sleep” is a direct reflection of Potvin’s vision, and overall *For Dreaming* brilliantly captures the hidden meanings in life’s simplest moments.

“Sonically, the album is a big mish-mash of a lot of things I love,” she says. “I had a pretty big breakthrough hearing [Bahamas’ 2014 album] *Bahamas Is Afie*, and that made me want to make an intimate record first and foremost. Kurt Vile’s album *Smoke Ring For My Halo* was another big inspiration. Then after watching the Brian Wilson biopic *Love And Mercy*, I decided to really

work with background vocals, as well as orchestral instruments such as French horn, bassoon and bass clarinet and harp.”

In terms of her actual songwriting process, Potvin leaned heavily on her continuing study of the craft. The catalyst proved to be the title track, a heart-wrenching character study, which nonetheless comes off almost like a Joni Mitchell confessional. “Prairie Sunrise” became another key song in the album’s evolution, written during the Holiday Train trip. For Potvin, it describes a moment of clarity she had while watching the breathtaking scenery go by, a moment that firmly set her back on track, so to speak.

Returning to the Prairies has always stoked Potvin’s curiosity, largely because she spent the first four years of her life in Regina, Saskatchewan before relocating to Hull, Quebec. Her music career grew out of an early love of classic blues and R&B, and she received her first significant attention with her 2006 Colin Linden-produced album *The Way It Feels*, which earned a JUNO nomination for Blues Album of the Year. Not to be typecast, Potvin experimented with new sounds on her subsequent albums *No Love For The Poisonous*, produced by Dave MacKinnon of alt-folk outfit FemBots, and *Play*, recorded in Vancouver with producer Steve Dawson.

For Dreaming now opens a new chapter for Potvin as a singer/songwriter with pop smarts, undeniable soul, and a ceaseless drive to keep pushing herself in new directions. It is an album perfectly suited to our current age where genres are essentially meaningless. Purity is all that matters, and *For Dreaming* is as pure an expression of Roxanne Potvin’s talent as she has ever offered.

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What a breath of fresh air! **** - Kevin Laforest, **The Hour Montreal**

A voice like melted butter on mashed potatoes. - Rich Terrry (aka Buck 65), **CBC Radio 2 Drive**

Inventively arranged to underscore Potvin’s bracing voice and nimble melodies, the pop-infused sound explores a new direction. The songs range from the robust beat of *Help Each Other* and the fluid, handclap-dotted pace of *I Wouldn’t Tell You That* to the breezy vibe of the breakup-recovery tune, *I Thought I’d Miss You*, and the quietly beautiful *Prairie Sunrise*. - Lynn Saxberg, **Ottawa Citizen**