

MARY-KATHRYN WONDERS IN **THE DEEP**

In a world of disposable music, there are a few artists who somehow manage to create music that transcends the ordinary. From the first time we hear them there is an intimacy, a fire, a subtle shade of interpretation that spurs our imagination. With repeated encounters comes a warmth and familiarity that is at once visceral and spiritual. We connect with them. We feel we know them. Mary-Kathryn is such an artist.

On her fifth album, *Wonders in the Deep*, Mary-Kathryn blends elements of soft pop, New Age and folk with world music influences as diverse as the continents to create a spiritual amalgam that transcends musical boundaries. Sophisticated without being elitist; understated without being simplistic, Mary-Kathryn displays an emotional depth that can only be described as ethereal.

With *Wonders in the Deep* Mary-Kathryn delves deep into the world music realm, painting word pictures on an aural canvas with exotic instrumentation, adroit production, and lyrics that stir the spirit and excite the imagination. But as one Billboard Magazine reviewer so aptly put it, “the most affecting instrument...is Mary-Kathryn’s lovely voice.”

“I attempt to create a spiritual experience through music,” Mary-Kathryn explains. “My hope is that it will take you on a journey; that your imagination might be stirred to discover something wonderful.”

In addition to writing or co-writing most of the songs on *Wonders in the Deep*, Mary-Kathryn also assumed co-producer responsibilities along with Paul Buono (Cherie Adams, Free Reign). Together Mary-Kathryn and Paul called on the world-class talents of percussionist Carl Albrecht (LeAnn Rimes, Paul Overstreet); Fergus Marsh (Pierce Pettis, Steve Bell) on Chapman stick & bass; Mario Sangermano (Wayne Watson, Twila Paris) on stand-up bass; pianist David McKay (Quad Venti, Max Lucado); Benjamin Wolaver (Annie Moses Band) on cello; and Michael Lewandowski (Natchez Thrace) on mandolin. Five-Time Grammy Award winning audio engineer Paul Salvesson (MercyMe, Natalie Grant) mixed the project.

The result is an album that feels tactile; textured; woven rather than layered. It sounds like fabric would feel; it looks like color would sound. It has to be experienced, rather than simply ‘listened to.’

“As with any language that is sung, you don’t have to understand it to enjoy it,” Mary-Kathryn explains. “The sound and the spirit is what matters, and the music is just as important in communicating the message as the words. The music itself is speaking.

Wonders in the Deep is part of the evolution from where I first started. I was heavily influenced by Enya’s music at the beginning of my recording career. I felt her music had a very spiritual aspect to it. But as time passed I found myself drawn to music that is more rhythmic, more world music influenced. *Wonders in the Deep* is more guitar-driven than my previous projects, and we used more live strings - cello, piano, mandolin. For me, sound is

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color, a voice that is speaking beyond words, so when I'm creating and recording I'm very intentional about the sounds I choose. People tell me my music is visual, experiential. I couldn't ask for more."

"Hear My Cry," the opening number of the 10-song album, begins acapella, relying solely on Mary-Kathryn's fetching vocals to engage the listener, before segueing into driving, rhythmic percussions and understated strings. Contemporary Latin rhythms and mesmerizing, mystical melodies accentuate **"Beyond,"** before slipping peacefully into the lovely and pensive, **"Deep Calls to Deep,"** a classic example of Mary-Kathryn's singular ability to combine earthy instrumentation with ethereal vocals to produce a visceral, vicarious spiritual encounter.

"Ships" is another song that combines emotive, intuitive instrumentation with atmospheric vocals to create an experiential environment. You can almost feel the sea spray, washing over the sides of an ancient galley. The song segues appropriately enough into the Middle Eastern influenced **"Mediterranean Passage."**

Mary-Kathryn points to **"Elohim,"** a song she co-wrote with Paul Buono, as one of the most personal songs on the album. "We wrote the melody first, and the lyrics came after," she explains. "I love being inspired by the music. It felt like a prayer, like intercession. I had been impacted by the film *Slumdog Millionaire*, and it gave me a burden for the oppressed peoples of the world. Elohim is one of the Hebrew names of God, and this whole song is a heart's cry, a prayer that God will minister to the needs of the oppressed."

The acoustic guitar driven **"Nathaniel's Song"** skirts familiar contemporary Americana territory, but also finds Mary-Kathryn using her extraordinary vocals to express emotions that are too deep for mere words. **"Where Can I Go"** melds sweet piano with synth, strings and percussions to create a moody, alternately melancholy and ecstatic musical environment, while **"Into The Heavens"** combines Arabic tones with Occidental melodies, resulting in a mesmerizing World Music experience. Mary-Kathryn draws on her own spiritual heritage to imbue **"You're With Me"** with sacred impetus. "I see you where I am, and I know you are with me," she sings. "I don't have to fear, you're with me."

"Our culture tends to live in the here and now, and ignore the vast well of deep water that is the spiritual," Mary-Kathryn muses. "There is so much more to be discovered."