

Mp3 Donna Ulisse - When I Look Back

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Donna's honest writing vocals blend with Keith Sewell's guitar playing production to take you down a traditional bluegrass path, up an Appalachian mountain across a blacktop highway. 14 MP3 Songs

COUNTRY: Bluegrass, COUNTRY: Americana Details: Donna was born in Hampton, Virginia and surrounded by a musical family. She made her first appearance singing at the tender age of three when she wandered onto the stage with a bluegrass band and broke out into Take This Hammer. From that moment until now there has never been any doubt that she would be creating music. She worked in a local western swing band where she met and married Rick Stanley being fully indoctrinated into a bluegrass family when Ricks cousin Ralph Stanley along with the Clinch Mountain Boys performed at their wedding reception. In the 1980s Donna moved to Nashville and stayed busy singing demos for publishers and writers. One of those demos landed on the desk of Dale Morris, then manager of Alabama, now managing Gretchen Wilson, Big and Rich and Kenny Chesney. Within a few hours of meeting Dale she was signed to Atlantic Records and released an album Trouble At The Door in 1991. The album had three single releases and two videos. During this time she appeared on the network TV show Hot Country Nights with Crystal Gayle, Merle Haggard, Mark OConnor, Steve Warner and Suzy Boggus. She then performed at the NBC party hosted by Dick Clark where she performed on stage along with Garth Brooks Brooks and Dunn. She was also a guest on Hee Haw, Nashville Now, Crook and Chase and during this time she performed on shows with Earl Thomas Conley, Lonestar, Vince Gill, John Michael Montgomery, Tracy Lawrence and Michelle Wright to name a few. After a heartbreaking ending on a major label Donna met Ray and Douglas Johnson of Hadley Music Group, her current publisher. They recognized her incredible talent as a singer and wanted to champion her talent. It was suggested by a major label head and friend that Donna find her true voice through writing. This CD is the result of that journey. In her own words she says, this is the best music I have ever been involved in. From the very first count on the very first song I recorded for this CD, we breathed as one... melody, lyric, instrumentation and vocally; a perfect marriage. I have found myself at last! When I Look Back would be described as bluegrass without borders. It is a collection of personal experiences, if not all lived by Donna herself, then

vicariously through the experiences of her close friends and family. Each song has a wonderful story behind it. Here are a few described below in Donna's own words: **SHE GOES SAILING:** A true story about my Italian immigrant grandparents Carmine and Maria Ulisse. My Papa bravely started a new life in America. It took him five years to earn his green card so that he could sponsor my grandmother who waited those long years in Italy until she received the letter telling her to sail across the ocean to him. I still try to imagine what seeing him must have been like after five years. **THE WALLS CRY:** A friend of mine was going through an especially hard divorce and needed some support the day her husband was moving out. When I pulled up to her house and saw the U-Haul backed up to her red front door, the sadness struck me and settled. After a long day of pushing furniture back in place, I went home and took a long hot shower. Getting out of the shower, I noticed the condensation dripping down my yellow bathroom walls as though they were crying and the song was born. **SHE NEEDS TIME:** Every year I attend a family reunion in the Clinch Mountains. My husband has a large extended family and a large percent of them have never been off the mountain. One of his aunts found a way to carve a living out of the hard earth by opening up the only public pool in the mountains. She is a hard worker, raising most of her own food grandkids with very little time for herself. She shared with me that she gets up before the sun comes up to swim a few laps alone and cherishes those moments like gold until the sun goes down and everybody leaves when she takes another few laps. This song is a tribute to this elegant mountain woman. **REVIEW BY ED MORRIS:** The Elements of Bliss There are so many vivid situations and characters in Donna Ulisse's first bluegrass album that listening to it is as illuminating as reading a book of great short stories. Those of us who have loved her voice since it blossomed on Atlantic Records in the early 90s are not surprised that she sings bluegrass with such knowledge and conviction. She can sing anything exquisitely, a point she made clear to the toughest audience in the world when she performed in 1999 at the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame ceremonies. The crowd adored her. And the next day, Terry Choate, who was then in charge of the event, was still shaking his head in amazement. She's scary good, he marveled. What is surprising and delightful is Donna's grasp of what authentic bluegrass music is all about. Keep in mind that she wrote or co-wrote every song here. Each one is about an Eden lost or a Heaven aspired to. This is precisely as it should be. At its heart, bluegrass is the soundtrack of people who are weary of the here and now. They yearn for a life so uncluttered and simple that it can exist only in the imagination, whether it's that little cabin home on the hill or a cabin in the corner of Gloryland.

Donna doesn't succumb to cabin clichés. Her metaphors are fresher and more startling. But all that old-time yearning for better days is still there in her lyrics. In choosing Keith Sewell as her producer, Donna tapped into one of the most fertile talents in music. His facility for weaving just the right instruments and vocal harmonies together and his ability to achieve those sounds is astounding. The supporting musicians, most of whom are already big names in bluegrass, are unparalleled in their versatility and inventiveness. So here we have the elements of bliss-impeccable bluegrass music and Donna Ulisse's irresistible voice. It's better than a trip to the old homeplace. Edward Morris MORE REVIEWS: Donna and I knew this record needed to be as organic as possible to give her voice enough space. Her vocals throughout the album are honest and pure. It was wonderful how the instruments responded to her as we tracked each tune. This approach allowed the lyrics to be center stage. The song was the focus; we built the track around that. Many records totally miss that concept, but that to me, is what makes this record special. Keith Sewell/ Producer Skaggs Family Recording Artist Donna's wonderful voice and songwriting skills plus the musicianship of some of the best pickers and singers on the planet equals a project extremely pleasing to the bluegrass lover's ear. Carl Jackson "It's hard to say which is more exciting, Donna's singing or her songwriting. "When I Look Back" instantly establishes her as one of bluegrass music's most formidable stars". Wade Jessen/ Billboard Donna Ulisse has provided one of the great high-lonesome surprises of the new millennium, a project that delivers a devastating emotional wallop. When I Look Back is the kind of album a legendary artist delivers about ten albums down the road at the peak of their musical walk, not as their debut disc! Donna's songs are in a league of their own, intelligently crafted, thoughtful, inspired and married to some truly interesting and memorable melodies. There's a level of depth to these songs seldom heard in the typical bluegrass bill of fare. Donna traverses a number of styles with aplomb and ease. As a singer she's soulful, lonesome, powerful, vulnerable and relentlessly engaging. The songs are creatively arranged and the production pristine. When this project hits CD bins, it's going to send shockwaves through the bluegrass community. There's a new singer in town that has it all! Unforgettable voice, killer songs and the ability to sing bluegrass the way it should be sung with passion, soul and just a little bit of country. Once Ralph Stanley serves his two terms as President, I'm voting for Donna! Dave Higgs NPR, Nashville, TN

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