

Lizz Wright – *Shadow* – Song Descriptions



Acclaimed vocalist and songwriter **Lizz Wright** makes the launch of her indie label, Blues & Greens, official with her latest studio album, *Shadow*. Produced by **Chris Bruce** and executive produced by Wright, *Shadow* features five new originals. On “Sparrow,” **Angelique Kidjo** appears alongside Wright in a story song told through lyrics and Yoruba about a tremendous love between sisters and an unruly storm approaching. As a kid, Wright and her sister Vanessa lived with their family in a mobile home on several flat acres about a mile away from a large lake. Wright remembers in vivid detail how an unforgettable storm approached. This childhood memory references the disorientation that relationship conflict can bring between siblings. Kidjo sings in pleading and prayerful phrases over the song as a moment of discord and chaos becomes a place of shelter and deeper love.

“Your Love” embodies the pure joy of dancing to summon and resolve the grief of loved ones lost. A propulsive drum beat by **Deantoni Parks** underlines **Meshell Ndegeocello**’s nuanced bass groove on “Your Love.” In layered vocals, Wright sings “all day, walk around singing...wake me up!” “Your Love” is a moment of ancestral recall with moving references to the faith of Wright’s upbringing.

“Root Of Mercy” brings Wright to her grandmother’s favorite oak tree along a dirt road in Georgia. The symbolism of the tree dates back to when her grandmother was raising several children as a young widow. When she was overwhelmed, she would find herself at the foot of this great tree and “she would kneel and pray there until she found her peace.” Lizz describes her grandmother as a force of nature and *Shadow* is her way of laying her own roots in the absence of her grandmother’s assuring presence.

With arpeggio guitar picking by producer and co-writer Chris Bruce, “Circling” explores the tender ambiguity of new love. “Circling” spirals around the kind of encounter that may only happen once, but can change how we love altogether. “This Way” is a song of taking space and standing up in love. Wright sings, “I’ve heard so much about love, but I learned the most from need.” She wanders and makes her way to feel and find what’s real.

At a pace of gentle walking, Wright crosses a valley of shadows with Cole Porter’s “I Concentrate on You.” The beloved jazz standard is arranged by **Adam Levy** with string parts composed by **Hanna Benn**. “I Made A Lover’s Prayer” by **Gillian Welch and David Rawlings** is among the simplest songs on *Shadow*, but the repeated phrases carry the sentiment that Wright feels most deeply. She features her longtime pianist **Kenny Banks Sr.** on organ and local Chicago string players.

“No More Will I Run” is a **Toshi Reagon** tune that first appeared on Wright’s live album, *Holding Space*, which was recorded in Berlin in 2018 and was released in June 2022. A newly recorded studio version of “No More Will I Run” appears on *Shadow*.

On “Sweet Feeling” by **Candi Staton**, Wright digs her heels into the blues without apology. Making a home in the blues city of Chicago, she signals that now is the time and place to lean back and be in it. Lizz’s take of **Caitlin Canty**’s “Lost In The Valley” features violinists **Trina Basu** and **Arun Ramamurthy**.

Sandy Denny’s “Who Knows Where The Time Goes” has been in the repertoire of potential songs for Wright to record for several years. Wright felt *Shadow* was the place for the song with its essence of loving beyond the shadow of time.