



JOY LYNN WHITE
On Her Own: Demos 2002

Sunday / My Heart Breaks / I Turn On The Light / Iris Loves Elmer / Secret Crush / Love Sometimes / Girls With Apartments In Nashville / An Exception / On Her Own / One More Time

Producer: none listed

Self-release / no number (38:44)

Like so many young hopefuls, Joy White paid her dues in Nashville before her potential was recognised and she was signed to a recording deal with Columbia in the early '90s. Whether or not she was given the right material to record, or whether she was promoted as well as she might have been, is debatable but, after three albums, Joy Lynn White, as she came to be known, was dropped and found herself back where she started.

Last year, in the company of her good friend Suzy Ragsdale, Joy played a few dates in the UK and I was fortunate to catch her in a small pub in Sheffield. With just her own guitar and Suzy on keyboards, I was mightily impressed by the power of this diminutive lady's voice and for the life of me fail to understand why she hasn't been snapped up by another major label.

But she hasn't been and, as she forthrightly states on her

brief sleeve note here, "We call these recordings 'demos' which means they were recorded as quickly as possible and then used to pitch to other recording artists in hopes that the writers will get their songs cut and make some money."

Well, the songs were recorded in no less than six small studios between 1997 and 2001 and were finally mixed in two hours, so don't expect any frills. Further, as White warns, "No pitch correctors were used in the making of these demos," so anyone expecting the technically perfected and full-bodied sounds on her Columbia recordings might be disappointed.

Personally, I love the stripped down approach. It allows Joy to do what she pleases with her voice, and time and again she slips into a haunting falsetto which few of today's big hitters would dare to attempt on their recordings.

The songs, most co-written with fellow writers Gwil Owen, Jann Browne, Angelo, Larry Gottlieb, Duane Jarvis and Amy Rigby, are varied in theme and a few, like *Sunday, I Turn On The Light, Secret Crush* and *Love Sometimes*, with its insistent backback and la-la-la chorus, have a fairly strong pop feel to them.

What's interesting about listening to these demos is trying to guess who they might have been aimed at. Time and again in White's phrasing and vocal style (rather different to her Columbia recordings), I detected echoes of Iris DeMent. Now, in talking to Joy briefly after her Sheffield performance, I learnt that Iris and Joy are friends and that Iris has not written anything for quite a while.

On suggesting that Joy and Iris write together, Joy told me it was unlikely as Iris tended not to collaborate.

However, it crossed my mind that Iris could record a number of the songs featured on this demo album and make them her own. Significantly, to lend a little weight to this assumption, Iris's long marriage to Elmer fell apart a couple or three years ago. Since then she has found new love and has re-married, but it's surely indubitable that Joy had her friend in mind when she wrote *Iris Loves Elmer* and a few other songs here.

So, will Joy Lynn White find herself another major record deal? Perhaps not with these particular demos, but certainly the lady has a great voice, looks and personality and I hope that someone out there appreciates her talent. In the meantime, when you listen to *Girls With Apartments In Nashville* you're left in no doubt that Joy Lynn White has been there, and is still there, and knows exactly what she's talking about. (www.joylynnwhite.com)

Al Moir