

SPECIAL
ALBUM
REVIEW
**CRYSTAL
GAYLE**

COUNTRY MUSIC REVIEW

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featuring
CRYSTAL GAYLE
ON RECORD
COUNTRY TRADITION
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Wrong Road for

Crystal Gayle

BRYAN CHALKER REVIEWS THE NEW CRYSTAL GAYLE ALBUM, 'WE MUST BELIEVE IN MAGIC'...

Many of us await new releases by Crystal Gayle in much the same way as a Don Williams album, — with eager anticipation and mounting enthusiasm. That Crystal hasn't yet become a major star in the United Kingdom is just one of those unfortunate quirks of fate. The ingredients are all there — good looks, talent, a characteristic voice, superb material and an identifiable sound. From all standpoints Crystal Gayle has got what it takes but somehow the magic is not coming together forcefully enough to give the lady that final boost into the charts.

Three previous albums and a number of splendid singles have established Crystal with American country audiences and she does have a kind of underground following in this country but sales of her recordings here have been

disappointingly low. This year's outstanding Wembley appearance, followed by one or two television appearances, finally convinced a lot of 'in' people that Crystal Gayle possessed huge chart potential but, oddly enough, *United Artists Records* appear to have been slow to capitalise on ecstatic reviews from the press. What is required to launch Crystal as a pop entity is a major promotional campaign and not merely the rather subdued release of a few singles and albums.

Unfortunately, although this new album is brilliantly produced by Allen Reynolds, it lacks the bite and character of previous releases and the only tracks containing vestiges of the 'Gayle Sound' are 'River Road', which UA have wisely chosen as the new single, and 'Make A Dream Come True'. 'River Road', written by Sylvia Tyson (of Ian & Sylvia fame), is a splendid song that brings out the very best in Crystal Gayle and Lloyd Green's steel guitar carries it along in true modern country fashion. Allen Reynolds' much imitated but seldom successfully reproduced clip-clop beat is much in evidence on both these songs but, elsewhere, the album seems to be searching for a solid direction. On the one hand you

have the old sound, with its superior and highly distinctive quality, whilst, on the other, it seems that both producer and artiste are experimenting and I can find no excuse for including the Cole Porter song, 'It's All Right With Me', or the Frankie Vaughn/Jim Lowe hit from 1956, 'Green Door'. What should have been an outstanding cut, 'All I Want To Do In Life', sounds half-hearted and lacking in roundness of sound and general attack. The song, written by Allen Reynolds, is hit material for someone but to date it hasn't received the right treatment. So far Sandy Theoret, Chip Hawkes, Marianne Faithful and Crystal Gayle have tried their hands at it and the best version was the early one recorded by Sandy Theoret on *Sing Me A Love Song* (Boot BOS 7164 — Canadian release). Sandy actually co-wrote the song with Allen Reynolds and, with the right Reynolds treatment it could and should be the ideal vehicle for Crystal Gayle.

The title song, 'We Must Believe In Magic', again composed by Allen Reynolds (in association with Bob McDill) is strong and the gimmicky moog synthesiser intro makes it a strong contender for chart status but, again, it's not

familiar Crystal Gayle territory.

With the exception of 'River Road' and 'Make A Dream Come True' (Larry Kingston), Crystal appears to lack enthusiasm, which makes me wonder in whose hands lay the final choice of material. I see no harm in broadening an artiste's musical horizons — it worked well enough for Dolly Parton and Waylon Jennings — but I'm rather afraid that by virtually discarding the sound that identified the earlier *United Artists* albums, Crystal is in danger of throwing away the opportunity of becoming a major international country star. Admittedly, Crystal does possess an extremely versatile voice and she is obviously quite able to sing virtually any type of material, from blues and soul, through to rock — but country is what she does best of all and right now the field is wide open for her. In the past I've likened her to a female Don Williams and I still believe that with good, solid promotion and a return to her old sound, she can become very big indeed internationally.

At this point in time it might even be prudent of *United Artists* to compile a *Best Of...* album; somehow I don't yet think it's too late to re-work some of those earlier titles, including 'Wrong Road Again', 'Somebody Loves You' and 'This Is My Year For Mexico'. At the moment, however, I believe Crystal is on the wrong road...

The number of the album is UAS 30709 but if you want to try the single first, that's on UP 36284 and the B-side is 'It's All Right With Me'.

The running order for the album is as follows:

SIDE ONE: Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue; I Wanna Come Back To You; River Road; It's All Right With Me; Going Down Slow.
SIDE TWO: All I Wanna Do In Life; Make A Dream Come True; Green Door; Funny; We Must Believe In Magic.

Special effects on 'It's All Right With Me' are credited to New Grass Revival, featuring Sam Bush on fiddle and Courtney Johnson on banjo, whilst other 'effects' are handled by The Trolleycar Band. The musicians' credits include Hargus Robbins and Charles Cochran, keyboards; Jim Isbell, drums; Joe Allen, bass; Jim Colvard and Dave Kirby, guitars; Allen Reynolds and Reggie Young, electric guitars; Lloyd Green, steel guitar; Buddy Spicher, fiddle; Billy Puett, flute and clarinet; and Shane Kelster, moog synthesiser. Background vocals feature Janie Fricke, Garth Fundis, Sandy Mason Theoret and Marcia Routh, among others.

From a production angle I can't fault the album but I'm certainly very disappointed in the end result as far as Crystal Gayle's performance is concerned and the rather alien material gives me cause for concern.