

Sisu

By

Jennifer DeFrayne

Written by

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Jennifer describes **Sisu** as a personal journey, one that has seen a continuance of her determination to overcome great obstacles in her path, her bravery, spirit, her **Sisu**.

From her proud Finish heritage she has created an album of outstanding natural beauty and built in a real sense of fortitude and resilience, so let's go on that journey with her right now and explore this new wonderland of empowering musical inspirations.

This sojourn with the artist begins with a piece called **Fire Island**, a composition that is perfect for drawing us the opening doorway to this incredible album, a track that has everything, build, a smooth yet empowering tempo and an undeniable melody. Apart from the artists mesmerizing performance on the keys, take a listen to the percussion by *Jeff Haynes*, a totally sublime performance can be found here.

The track **Be Who You Are**, not only highlights the skills of DeFrayne on Piano, but also shows how wonderfully she has progressed since her last album. This one is both subtle and inspiring, utilising the skills of the multi-talented *Jill Haley* on English Horn and the very gentle but classy violin of *Sara Milonovich*.

I do enjoy a good title track and even more so when it proudly sits as the longest piece off the album. A memorable moment of magic can be found right here on **Sisu**. A thoughtful refrain and a wonderfully fluent performance by DeFrayne, is only added to by a stunning performance once more by *Milonovich*, partnered by EWI master *Premik Russell Tubbs*, and some very

subtle bass from *Michael Manring*. **Sisu** is a composition you never want to end, but thankfully, this seven minute plus creation, will pacify her fans and us very eager listeners with consummate ease.

As we arrive at the track **Beyond**, we find something rather haunting, deeply moving and memorable, the energy here seems to float with a sense of ambience that is hard to find these days, the Flugel Horn of *Jeff Oster* adds to that ambience as does the very subtle guitar of *Jeff Pearce*. **Beyond** is one of my personal favourites off the release, it has a real sense of grit and determination built within that is so alluring.

Gathering is almost an anthem of types; it has a slow build, but progresses in a passionate but soothing embrace of musical confidence, a call of arms to a collective strength perhaps. Musically this is so charming and contains a really thoughtful approach by DeFrayne on piano; also very noteworthy was the performance by *Manring* on both Bass and Ebow.

We now find ourselves at the half way juncture of the release **Sisu** by **Jennifer DeFrayne** and are now gifted yet another one of my personal favourites the mystical, but focused and centred composition, **Palo Santo**. This is one of those songs that will sit on repeat for days; it has that addictive and balanced energy about it. I listen to this as I sit on my veranda, sheltered from the midday sun, at peace and at oneness with the odour of a lavender incense stick burning to my left and this harmonic music, blissfully drifting through my mind, and it fits so very well indeed.

So on we go, and our musical pathway now takes us deep within the realms of this latest release, where we come across an interesting and confident arrangement called **Roots**. The tempo and energy of this piece is really charming, almost like honouring all that has gone before you and respecting your roots. The balance of this composition is perfect and DeFrayne's sparkling performance here is outstanding in this utterly impressive song.

There is something very special about this next piece; **Stepping Stones** is a careful, but resilient track, which offers a sense of onward movement within the music that is simply unstoppable and undeniable. This is DeFrayne at her best as she plays light and dark, hard and soft, in a performance that is totally brilliant.

The tones of this quite breath-taking album seem to have got deeper and more pronounced as we move onward and into the project, on the album that is **Sisu**. On **Equanimity** we find that and ever more so, as we can feel a sense of strength perhaps to regain composure on this piece; the performance here is determined and the strings of *Milonovich* so mournful, but harmonic.

Internal Light is almost the mirror image of the last offering, within this beautiful composition one can feel that empowering light that resides deep within us all beginning to shine. This is without doubt one of the warmest and all-embracing tracks off the album.

We are nearing the end of our musical journey and have now arrived at the door marked, penultimate track, and it's called **Renew**. This journey has been inspiring and wondrous and **Renew** is an extension of that theme, it is a duet with English horn performer *Jill Haley* and this combination brings us a very special treat as we listen to its rejuvenating energies. A really magnificent performance can be found here by the artist and *Haley's* horn as always is assured and beautifully eloquent.

Once more we have arrived at the very last port of our musical journey with **Jennifer DeFrayne**, but before we depart this dimension of melodious perfection, the artist has one more enjoyable moment for us and it is called **Perseverance**. This is a composition that does what it says on the can, and what a perfect way to leave a stunning album, she leaves her listeners inspired, empowered, rejuvenated and ready to reach out for that repeat button one more time.

Jennifer DeFrayne has manifested into the world the perfect album for these times of self-doubt and fear, a release that is inspirational in its intent and preservers in its beliefs of rising above all that is negative, and never giving up. **Sisu** should be a musical example to us all. It's an album that contains some of the best musicians of their time and genre and a performance on piano by DeFrayne that is absorbing, formidable and spirited.