

JAZZ



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Gretchen Parlato *In A Dream*

Obliqsound | ★★★★★

Gretchen Parlato (v), Aaron Parks (p, kys), Lionel Loueke (g, v), Derrick Hodge (b) and Kendrick Scott (d, perc).
Rec. date not stated

Some singers impress with their emotional honesty, others with their exceptional range, rhythmic subtlety or clarity of line. Occasionally, an artist comes along whose beauty of timbre alone makes you sit up and listen. Gretchen Parlato is one such singer. Winner of the prestigious Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocals Competition in 2004, Herbie Hancock has referred to Parlato as "a singer with a deep, almost magical connection to the music." From the brilliant neo-bossa reimagining of Stevie Wonder's 'I Can't Help It' to the oceanic calm of Ellington's 'Azure' to the dazzlingly fresh take on

SWV's 'Weak', this follow-up to her 2005 debut certainly backs up that claim. The singer somehow makes everything sound effortless, the vocal line weaving in and out of the intricately layered counterpoint one moment, floating delicately on top of it the next. Parlato almost manages to torpedo the whole enterprise by incorporating snippets of herself singing songs at the age of two – there really ought to be a moratorium on this sort of thing – but the three instances are mercifully brief. *Peter Quinn*