

jam! SHOWBIZ MUSIC

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Artist: Grant, Jenn

Jenn Grant flying over the Moon

By ALLAN WIGNEY - Sun Media

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"I feel like dancing in the wind," Jenn Grant croons on one of 13 exquisitely crafted songs from *Orchestra for the Moon*, a solid mid-way contender for 2007's finest album.



Yet, in the hands of the P.E.I. native who has called Halifax home for the past 16 of her 26 years, such an unbridled expression of joy is by necessity immediately qualified.

"But," she sings as the peppy tune is briefly called to a halt, "you know how I am."

Thanks to *Orchestra for the Moon*, we do. Or, at least, we have been left with a lasting first impression as this siren's song lures us into a moody musical world, described with an ever-present catch in the singer-songwriter's voice.

An impressive supporting cast includes Ron Sexsmith, Jill Barber and Matt Mays. Yet, through a succession of inventive pop songs worthy of Feist, Harmer or Wainwright (Rufus or Martha), the focus is invariably on the artist.

Jenn Grant does melancholy well.

It's a fact illustrated even in conversation, as the soft-spoken singer tells of the final days of her family's beloved dog Stanley, to whom Grant first sang each of *Orchestra's* lovely lullabies.

"It was very, very, very, very emotional," Grant says. "We took him to P.E. I., to a cabin on the north shore, and we had this veterinarian come down to the beach. For three days he ate ice cream cones in the ocean and had eggs for breakfast and whatever he wanted. Then she put him to sleep, while he was rolling on the beach and chewing a bone, with his tail wagging. It was so sad. It's the saddest thing that's ever happened to me."

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Grant agrees, however, that there are certainly worse ways to go. And we should all be so lucky as to spend our final years being serenaded by a voice as heavenly as Grant's. On Orchestra, the singer frequently bursts into spontaneous scatting, employing her voice to its full capacity with 'oohs' and 'ahs' when at a loss for words.

That, perhaps, is a skill learned from Stanley.

"I think that's just an innate thing that happens, that I never even thought about or noticed," Grant says of such wordless vocal passages. "It's just something I hear in my head. But I'm writing some stuff right now that's not like that as much. Now that everybody's talking about it, I'm not doing it."

There is much talk about Grant as a disarming new voice on Canada's music scene. In the coming months and years, there will be much more. In fact, one can't help but wonder where the 26-year-old art school grad has been all our lives.

"I performed a few shows when I was about 15, then I got stage fright for about 10 years," Grant explains. "I tried to get advice from people and they just would say, 'Just get up there onstage and go for it and you'll be fine.' But I really wasn't fine. I tried a few times, in front of a large group of people, and didn't succeed."

Grant eased her way back into performing, first through a family trio, then as a touring member of the Halifax-based ensemble The Heavy Blinkers.

"That showed me a different way of performing," Grant says, "because when I performed with Heavy Blinkers I don't have a guitar and it's not my own songs, so I go into a different headspace. I feel really theatrical when I sing with Heavy Blinkers, kind of like an old romantic movie."

Orchestra for the Moon has its romantic moments, and there is a touch of another age to Grant's craftsmanship. Yet, this is a movie we had not seen before. And whose happiest endings are invariably tinged with sadness.

Stanley would understand. And wherever he is now, his tail is surely still wagging.

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