

## LUCY ROSE

Something's changing in Lucy Rose. After two albums of feeling her way through the densely-populated landscape of contemporary singer-songwriter music she has picked a point in her career when most people are recycling their hits to bin the satnav, head off the map and commit to a graphically authentic version of her musical self. Sometimes you have to lose yourself to re-invent yourself.

"It's like I was an-uncracked glo-stick...and now I've been cracked," says Lucy in the music/travel documentary which accompanies her third album 'Something's Changing'. For those familiar with Lucy Rose through her inventive and many-hued first two albums it shouldn't come as too great a surprise that she has been breaking with conformity and pushing emotional boundaries. Since relocating from Warwickshire to London aged 18 her musical progress has been less than conventional.

Showing up in 2010 as a girl-next-door with acoustic guitar, she played the open mic circuit on a trajectory to become a back room singer songwriter, but somehow ended up all over Radio 1.

However, in the pin-drop emotiveness of her album tracks and the frayed loveliness of her vocals it was clear that Lucy Rose was striving to get to somewhere other than the usual pop objective, a place of deep connection and poignant unaffected truth. Her quest may now be over, in the form an astonishingly assured third album 'Something's Changing', a delicious soulful thing of mellifluous, rolling, natural beauty.

"With the last album there was a pressure for the record to sound really modern and contemporary," she says. "And with this one it was like 'I want to make a record which sound like all the records I listen to', whether that was made in the 60s or 70s or recently."

Sometimes the best thing that can happen to an artist is they get fed up of being a square peg in a round hole and head off into the wild green yonder. By 2016 Lucy Rose was wondering what the point of it all was. She had achieved a lot: a debut album, 2012's 'Like I Used To' had set her up as one of the most influential of the new generation of UK artists. The singles 'Middle of the Bed', 'Bikes' and 'Shiver' made their own space on UK radio playlists. With her band she toured worldwide, climbed the festival bills, supported Neil Young in Hyde Park and played the Other Stage at Glastonbury Festival.

Her days as backing singer for Bombay Bicycle Club and Razorlight were gradually eclipsed and by the time the second album 'Work It Out' went top 10 in 2015, buoyed up with hooky singles 'Our Eyes' and 'Like An Arrow', she was theoretically established. The Manic Street Preachers and Ghostpoet had asked her to sing on tracks. She made a video for 'Nebraska' with Eastenders actor Danny Dyer (in drag). US rapper Logic flew her to LA to contribute to his album. But something was amiss.

"I think I got caught up in the business side of things or too worried about 'what radio needs' or 'what press wants' and I started worrying too much about it and writing songs in a different frame of mind," she says. "Even

though I didn't think I was at the time, it must have seeped in, all of that business side of things, which is not what music should be about. And then once the second album came out, I realized I should never have got caught up in all of that, because it really is nonsense."

The opportunity to push back against the nonsense came in spring 2016 when the volume of tweets coming from Latin America and the realization that her most listened to city on Spotify was Mexico City gave birth to the seed of an idea. Offer her fans in Latin America a deal: "If you book me a gig, I'll come and stay". It was a 'loco demente' plan but the outcome was far more fruitful and inspiring than could have been imagined.

For two months Lucy, her guitar and her backpack toured Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil and Mexico, playing free shows, staying with fans and "falling back in love with making music". The documentary of her experience there, fans blocking the street outside a gig above a launderette, trying to sleep on endless inter-city bus rides, connecting with a friend-fan who tells her "*for me music is God*", living with families in out of the way towns and overwhelmed by the kindness and faith in music of those she met, is deeply moving.

"Music is actually more than music for most people in the world," says Lucy. "Lots of my friends and family won't have that connection to music like the people I met, but to them it's more than just having background music when you're cooking, it's saved them in some sort of way."

"The documentary is a big part of this record and I think it explains why that trip was important and why it led to me making the record that I've made. The trip gave me confidence to do things like record in just one take and the songs came more easily."

Surfing on the insights of her travels, Lucy set out to make the third album her own sweet way. Real emotions, unprocessed, people playing in the same room, and if she wanted the bass to sound like Scott Walker's bass that would happen. Through a friend of a friend she hooked up with Brighton producer Tim Bidwell, and in the studio in his house found the ideal place to explore the evocative intimacy and widescreen sweep of the new songs.

"I spent the first day there and was getting back on the train at six o'clock and I'd already said to Tim that I want to make a record with you, my intuition was just saying this was the right place."

"Tim brought a lot of 'keeping the vision strong'. There were a couple of moments where I was worried that it was suddenly too low fi in some ways and he was like, "You have to commit to this, we've made the whole record like this"."

Every week Lucy would take the train to Brighton. The record was made in a remarkably fluent 17 days. Major contributions were made by Tim's in house bassist Ben Daniels and drummer Chris Boot (soon to head out as part of the live band) as well as guest appearances by Daughter's Elena Tonra, Bear's Den's Marcus Hamblett and Matthew and The Atlas' Emma Gatrill. On two tracks vocal harmonies are provided by The Staves ('Floral

Dresses' and 'Is This Called Home'). Meanwhile the experiences in Latin America add to the very human heart of the record.

"The songs just came more naturally after that trip, and from feeling good, and from learning so much about myself. And it's also that I feel the most comfortable in my own skin that I've ever felt in my life. So there is a lot of searching but there's been a lot of discovery which is on this record as well."

If 'Something's Changing' is an artistic peak perhaps the explanation is nothing more complicated than that it occupies that rarely located territory of truly empathic musicianship and songs which mean something. "*It's just a song, but without it would I have told you this,*" sings Lucy setting out her stall and opening the album with the harp cradled 'Intro' before unfurling a ten-song run of her most complete writing yet.

'Is This Called Home' rises on feathered string arrangements: "the words were initially inspired by, I guess, the travesty with what's going on with the refugees"; the strummed lilt of 'Strangest Of Ways' searches for belonging in nature; the flawless Lucy/Staves voices of 'Floral Dresses' belie the questioning subject matter: "I think there's a big part of me that felt like I'm not the right type of girl in many ways because I'm not really a 'regular girl'".

The skittering strings and piano of 'Second Chance' give advice on self-belief; the deep still pool of 'Love Song' commits to lifelong love; 'Soak It Up' takes it's time on a Neil Young-ish meander and the yearning 'Moirai' (the Greek God of fate) sympathises with the unfulfilled "I wanted to say 'Fate - you've let me down.'".

Not all the songs devote themselves to contemplative seriousness. 'No Good At All' charts a sunnier course, with something close to a soul funk chorus. 'Find Myself' is positively groovy.

"Some of the record has a real 70s soul feel to it. Al Green was definitely thrown round as a reference and even Carole King, she's a singer-songwriter but she was so on the line of soul as well."

When the album resolves into the shimmering brass and strings upswell of 'I Can't Change It All' its clear that the inspiration taken from breaking free of the nonsense has allowed for an album of truly remarkable emotional articulacy.

"'I Can't Change It All' is very inspired by the people I met in Latin America, and I wanted to do something to help them," she says. "But at end of it I just thought there was actually very little I could do, and I felt like the only thing I could do was write an album, or write a song for them, and that's kind of where it came from."

With a new partnership with Communion Records and an exciting new band for touring, Lucy Rose is as revitalised as it gets. This year for some dates she'll tour alongside the documentary, returning to Latin America first and then India, Europe, the US and Asia. Her heart and soul stuffed backpack is going to see a lot more airports. And if 'Somethings Changing' does the job it should do, she'll finally get the recognition she deserves as one of the UK's best songwriters, and a true believer in the power of music.

“Maybe this album doesn’t fit into the bigger picture,” she says “ But maybe I’m OK with that. I think I just wanted to put out something positive into the world, I feel like hopefully it will make people feel better.”

It will.

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