

# Parking Space, Monique Lisbon

Reviewed by Mick Pope

Reviewing my first Monique Lisbon album was pure accident. I reviewed another female artist, and the reviewer I had lined up pulled out. So I did it. An album dealing with sexual abuse of a minor was out of my comfort zone, but I did it. Now it is just the done thing for me to review Monique's work.

After a few albums dealing directly with the issue of abuse, the EP *Parking Space* (2015) represents a break in style and content. When I first listened to *Name It and Claim It*, I thought I'd received a Pentecostal style praise and worship album to review. Listen a little more carefully. This wonderfully produced, slick sounding album successfully skewers prosperity theology and easy answer theology that belittles the real struggles with pain, suffering and past traumas with the theological equivalent of "get over it."

After the big band sound of *Name It*, *Parking Space* is a nursery rhyme like critique of many people's prayers - parking spaces over the big issues of life. Tears are a result of a lack of trust, being a refugee is nothing compared to a lack of faith. Never has sarcasm sounded so sweet! Monique's Aussie twang is very obvious in *Holy Slot Machine*, where formulaic prayers are dismissed in a keyboard driven critique with a touch of Riverdance in the

bridge. A jazz theme complete with soulful sax deals with the idea that prayer is an instant fix for what ails us in *At The End of the Day*. *Little White Box* is a short and sweet statement about our willingness to try and contain Jesus. Finally, *Who Will You Be* is a ballad which expands on this idea "be deeper than our deepest thoughts."

Overall, *Parking Spaces* is a sweet easy listen with bitter aftertaste for those whose idea of God, prayer and the struggles of life are inflexible. The CD comes with accompanying DVD.

*Although the Rain* (2014) is a return to a more serious, less tongue in cheek feel, with a number of new songs but a few from earlier in Monique's career. It's a gentler, more soulful collection, and a good one for fans of the saxophone. *Extraordinary Everyday* is a catchy light rock, guitar driven opening call to see the beauty in the everyday and commonplace. *I Believe*, as the name suggests is a creedal song, a ballad not to formal propositions but faith, hope and love. Hate, anger and sorrow are signs of a journey not yet complete where the path isn't always clear, but where God carries us. Soulful sax and long chords ease the listener through the love ballad *Falling*. The new version of *Get It Out* is less jarring musically or vocally than the 2003 version, but



nonetheless drives home the point of indelible stain of some wrongs done.

*I Can Wait* is a soulful hymn to patience while *Are You There?* evokes for me the 80s, with a touch of Peter Gabriel and a touch of middle eastern flavour, crying out to God and finding the answer that he is indeed there. The remixed 1985 *Don't Forget* picks up on this theme of divine attention, the underlying cello providing the grounding support while Monique floats over the top, likewise in *The Thought of You*. *Release Us* is a return to a more electronic, driving sound. It's a call for freedom from idolatry and bondage to "praise the Risen One." The album finishes as it started, in an upbeat fashion with the electronica *Deliberately*, a call to live life in all its fullness with purpose.

These, and other works are available from Living Hope Resources, formerly MonoMusic: <http://www.livinghoperesources.com.au/>. Also available on iTunes.

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