

Celine Dion's "Courage"

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November 19, 2022 at 1:28 a.m. EDT



Celine Dion's "Making The Album" Youtube video cover. (Celine Dion)

When Canadian singer Celine Dion makes her acting debut next year in the romantic comedy-drama "Love Again," she will have her own emotional pain to draw from.

Celine plays herself who helps the male protagonist meet and win the heart of the female protagonist. This reminds me of her heart-broken experience 6 years earlier, when she needed help to walk out of the pain of losing her loved ones.

In 2016, Celine's husband and manager René Angélil died from throat cancer. Two days after René's death, Daniel Dion, Celine's older brother, died from cancer as well.

Losing them incited gossip about Celine being so devastated that she couldn't return to the stage. "I would be lying if I said I'm fine. I think of you at least a hundred times. I miss you," she penned during her interview with Hello! Magazine. The first two sentences are from the first two lines in her single "Courage."

To prove her courage to face the world once again, Celine released "Courage" in November 2019. "'Courage' was representing the whole losing my husband, losing my manager, my kids losing their father and to find the strength to keep going because I wanted to," she said to Global News.

The album scored No. 1 on the Billboard 200 albums chart in its debut week which was her first No. 1 in over 17 years; it also made Celine No. 1 on the Artists 100 chart.

As an album full of touching experiences, deep and complex emotions, and innovative musical approaches, "Courage" is definitely worth listening to. You will find inspiration and gain courage from the "strength, love, passion, and of course, a lot of courage" that the singer, writers, and producers endowed to the songs, according to Celine.

The album flows from song to song narrating Celine's personal growth from grief to facing life again, and centers around topics of love and courage. Celine, as always, used her constant powerful and technically skilled vocals to convey profound emotions and bring resonance to listeners. Even as time might have weakened her voice, she still presented high pitches that we awed by in some songs in the album.

The album's biggest technical surprise is the incorporation of new styles and elements. Dion says she worked with "new people" such as Sia, David Guetta, and Greg Kurstin, to produce "different sounds," and "different approaches." For example, "Flying on My Own" is in an electronic dance music style, "Lying Down" is a modern pop ballad that integrated Sia's style of work, while "Imperfections" is a contemporary radio pop production. These songs are all different from the powerful love songs Celine is used to singing.

The songs' arrangements were rich and innovative due to use of multiple instruments, drum sequences, sounds, and audio effects. But for quieter love songs, the main instruments were piano and string instruments set the emotional tone. These instruments were mixed in low volume to highlight Celine's skillful and emotional vocals. In short, the album gives listeners a varied listening experience through different arrangement designs.

In terms of composition, the writers designed the chord progressions to be suitable to the message the song wanted to convey. For instance, in "Perfect Goodbye," the chord progression for the chorus section - C Dm Am F - had a sense of melancholy and sadness that matched the song's topic of saying goodbye to a loved one. In addition, each song's melody in the album is melodious, easy to remember, and distinct. Nowadays, many songs' melodies are composed by an established harmony pattern, and therefore tend to be alike. So, it is difficult to compose a melody that is both tuneful and stands out among other "mediocre" melodies.

What makes the songs even more delicate and meaningful is the thoughtfully written lyrics. In "Courage" for example, the verse began as a dialogue between the singer and her loved one, with a sense of nostalgia and emotion of missing:

"I still come home from a long day
So much to talk about, so much to say
I love to think that we're still making plans
In conversations that'll never end."

When entering the chorus and the bridge, it soon became a psychological monologue and the singer's confession to her loved one:

“Courage
Don't you dare fail me now
I need you to keep away the doubts”

...

“Cause it's not easy
When you're not with me
This world of madness goes faster now
And it's a train wreck but I won't crash yet
Long as your echo never fades out.”

Just reading the lyrics made me sorrowful, and not to mention when Celine used her deeply emotional and even choked voice to sing these touching lyrics.

Immediately after releasing the album, Celine started her Courage World Tour. She's back on stage to prove her rebirth after grief and give back to her fans. Unfortunately, she rescheduled the 2022 European tour dates to 2023 due to her “ongoing recovery from health issues.”

According to Hello! Magazine, Celine has suffered from "severe and persistent muscle spasms.”

In her new movie role, Celine is now helping lovers meet. Her role implies that after going through the pain of separating from her loved ones, she is facing life again and conveying the importance of love and accompanying loved ones to other people.

Let us look forward to more courageous actions brought by Celine's rebirth!

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