Ann Sweeten

Just This Side of Spring

by Lucy Gibson

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Ann Sweeten is a pianist, composer, arranger and producer, and her latest album is a poignant instrumental assemblage of original compositions. Usually placed in the New Age genre, Sweeten’s classical training and accolade as a Steinway Artist is abundantly clear in her eighth album, Just This Side of Spring. The album has a rich intensity, and Sweeten’s playing is beautiful and emotionally wrought.

The album is a tribute to Sweeten’s beloved dog Nikki, a Siberian Husky who died in 2008. Sweeten writes: “Nikki, my piano muse, who never tired of laying beneath my piano when I played, was quite possibly the sweetest dog I’ve ever known.” “Nikki’s Song” (track 7) presents a suitably pensive and rather melancholic homage to the pet whom Sweeten clearly treasured. The album boasts an array of restful and calming compositions, often with a cinematic and spiritually-inclined air. Collaboratively produced by Sweeten and Grammy award-winning artist/producer and founder of Windham Hill records Will Ackerman, Just This Side of Spring provides a delicate blend of New Age music with classical undertones.

Sweeten’s playing appears effortless and the melodies are tender with an intensely emotive feel. The piano is at the forefront of all the tracks; instruments such as the acoustic guitar, viola, violin, and flute gently accompany, but do not surpass, Sweeten’s playing. An ideal album for relaxation and reflection, Just This Side of Spring presents an ethereal, yet luxuriant and charming, collection of songs.