

Review

by Alex Henderson

When categorizing an artist's music becomes a challenge, that is a good thing—at least from a creative standpoint. CDs that are hard to categorize can be intimidating for marketing people at record companies, but creatively, it is likely to be a plus because artists who don't fit neatly into one category are often artists who are trying to avoid being generic or faceless.

Musician/composer/producer Gentle Thunder is such an artist; her album, *Beyond Words*, is not easy to categorize, although the best description is probably "instrumental world fusion with jazz and folk overtones." This early 2006 release was described as new age in a press release, but despite favoring a tranquil, relaxed, ethereal approach, *Beyond Words* isn't really new age—certainly not in the strict sense. Gentle Thunder's world music credentials, however, are quite strong. The instruments she plays on this 61-minute disc include the hammer dulcimer (which is associated with Celtic music) and Native American flutes; Will Clipman, one of the people who accompanies her, is heard on various African percussion, including udu drums. And the jazz overtones come from pianist/keyboardist/saxman AmoChip Dabney, whose soprano sax work hints at *Weather Report* and *the Yellowjackets*. In terms of ethnic influences, Gentle Thunder looks all over the globe for inspiration; elements of Native American, Asian, African, Middle Eastern and Celtic music all assert themselves during the course of the album. But despite being far-reaching in that sense, *Beyond Words* never sounds confused or unfocused. Gentle Thunder and colleagues Clipman and Dabney know exactly what they are doing on this nicely executed CD.

Tracks

	Title	Composer	Time
1	Big Sky Sunrise	Gentle Thunder ...	3:32
2	Seven Twenty Twins	Gentle Thunder ...	3:53
3	Feathered Pipe Portal	Gentle Thunder ...	1:38
4	Beyond Woods	Gentle Thunder ...	4:22
5	Walk in Beauty	Gentle Thunder ...	4:52
6	Glacier Tears	Gentle Thunder ...	6:34
7	Karma Groove	Gentle Thunder ...	6:26
8	Woven Essence	Gentle Thunder ...	5:07
9	Rooted Breath	Gentle Thunder ...	4:18
10	Heartland	Gentle Thunder ...	4:56
11	Renaissance Reunion	Gentle Thunder ...	2:05
12	Luminosity	Gentle Thunder ...	4:05
13	Pathfinders	Gentle Thunder ...	4:52
14	Summer Soulstice	Gentle Thunder ...	4:47

Releases

Year	Type	Label	Catalog #
2006	CD	Delvian	9411