



Suzanne Vega

Beauty & Crime, 45rpm, 200g Clarity Vinyl, Four Disc Set

Blue Note

Scheduled to be released January 12, 2010

Beauty and Crime is possibly Suzanne Vega's best effort since her debut album and likely even better than the highly acclaimed "Solitude Standing". "Beauty and Crime is a lengthy meditation on the city of New York, the place she calls home. These songs glide like a harlequin's ghost through the hearts and minds of city residents past and present, on its streets, in its hotels, apartments, in every corner of the city. There is more than the hint of memory on Beauty & Crime. The album is dedicated to the memory of Tim, who lived on "Ludlow Street" -- the name of the set's second cut, a searing and simply moving tribute to him -- and cites as muses in part "...Edith Wharton and all her heroines...and Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner for their passion," and who have songs named for them here. In doing so, 9/11 itself cannot be left out of the equation, and the album's final two cuts deal with personal versions of this story, one of which is informed by her brother-in-law Angel Ruiz, a New York City cop stationed at Ground Zero after the attacks on the World Trade Center. Most of these songs look at life in the interim, or remembering what the city was like in the '70s as on the cut "Zephyr and I."??Musically, this is easily her most adventurous record ever; yet it is also more accessible than any album since her debut. The craft and care put into the songs themselves and their articulation by Vega and producer Jimmy Hogarth are amazing.

Here, emotions are laid bare in places whether in the first, second, or third persons, but they are always placed inside elegant yet spare lyrics that are taut, poetic, and evocative. The dreamy soundscape contains layers of guitars, percussion (organic, electronic and live, in one case) strings, reeds, brass, and backing singers (including daughter Ruby Froom who appears on a couple of cuts, and KT Tunstall who appears once). But it's the sound of Vega's acoustic guitar on all these songs that is unmistakably at the top and provides the album's anchor. It's important to note this, simply because it keeps these beautiful pop songs rooted in a new kind of contemporary folk that Vega was a pioneer of in the '80s. And it keeps her rooted to her own catalog, from the beginning to the present. In other words, as she has experimented in the past with all kinds of sounds, she has forever remained herself and never more so than here, whether it's the jazzy, faux bossa nova of "Pornographer's Dream" or its predecessor, the stunning "New York Is a Woman." "Frank and Ava," is a rocking pop tune whose electric and acoustic guitars entwine, seemingly kissing, wrapped around a bassline played by Tony Shanahan from the Patti Smith Group writes a reviewer from All Music Guide." Mixed by Tchad Blake and recorded at both Sear Sound in New York and Olympic Studios in London, the sound of this record is full of depth and nuance that every audiophile and music lover will love. Mastered and cut on Classic Records "All Tube" cutting system by Bernie Grundman, this LP release is a must have and not to be missed! Highest recommendation. Available as a 45rpm, Four Single-sided Discs Box Set on Classic Records 200g Clarity SV-P II Vinyl.