

CD Reviews

Fifth Estate Collective

2007

Mick Kubiak: Here Comes Spring

cdbaby.com

reviewed by Sean Flynn

Mick Kubiak is the girl you were in love with in school. Who read novels and wrote in a notebook during class, despised convention and carried her otherworldly beauty and sexuality as simple givens. A part of no clique, Kubiak began to form her eviscerating and hilarious social critique of a culture obsessed with possessing women when she was barely seventeen.

After getting an Ivy League education, she went on to model for Vidal Sassoon and later the painter Philip Pearlstein, chronicling her life as both subject and object in dozens of unpublished journals, and underground recordings. She eventually released a CD (*Here Comes Spring*) of such raw power, subtle melancholy, and swagger, the entire album can be heard as one anthem of rage and joy.

Kubiak's music separates the women from the girls. Her intellectual prowess and lyricism blow singer songwriters like Neco Case and Liz Phair off the map. Her depth of empathy, wit, and the coolness of her expressed intentions, make P.J. Harvey appear to be having a long, drawn-out tantrum.

It is hard to find comparisons to Kubiak's work as a contemporary musician. While Nick Cave, Leonard Cohen, Lou Reed, and Chet Baker come easily to mind, Kubiak possesses an emotional versatility, and philosophical depth that sets her apart.

It's just as accurate to compare Kubiak to figures like Meret Oppenheim (the sculptor who produced *Breakfast in Fur*), installation artist Tracy Emin, or even comedians Lenny Bruce and Sarah Silverman.

Songs like "Atalanta Revisited," "Screen," and "Virgins and Whores," take on everyday sexism with the natural and common confidence of a kid throwing a bottle into the air and shooting it for target practice. You can feel the delight as the shards fly. The latter half of the album (with tunes like "Holy Holy," and "Wet and Rain," as standouts) is a return to the garden.

Kubiak puts a woman's voice where we have yet to commonly hear it in popular music: the brilliant, playful and redemptive song of true resistance, not limited to struggles with political entities or the state. *Here Comes Spring* is an anthem of rebirth through intellectual and sexual freedom. A tribute to the resilience of the human animal.

Juline Jordan: What She Said

julinejordan.com

reviewed by Sean Flynn

Juline Jordan's debut album, *What She Said*, is essential listening for the drive to the demonstration. (Just keep it in the front pocket of your black hoodie, so you don't forget it.) Jordan began her career as a rock DJ at Detroit's

WRIFFM, later becoming the co-host and producer of the long-running Peter Werbe Show, splitting her time between her music, her radio work, and beating the streets to stop the war.

Her years in rock radio have certainly paid off in terms of the refinement of her sound. *What She Said* is a fabulously put together album, each song infectiously catchy; a potential hit.

The bright, open guitar licks on the album compliment the directness and simple universality of her lyrics. This combined with the themes of love and politics, are conceptually reminiscent of Billy Bragg.

Tim Krukowski of the Detroit-based Sponge, adds to the CD's sound as Jordan's bassist, as well as doing double duty as producer. Sponge vocalist, Vinnie, joins Jordan for a duet on the scathing "Baghdad and Beyond."

But Jordan's great strength is in her absolutely gorgeous voice. The song "I Slowed Down," with its organ vamp-ing, perfect phrasing, lyrics that laud a lover, and Jordan's own voice singing back up, could have come right off Carol King's *Tapestry*.

Her courageous up-beat, soulful alto bring to mind the Indigo Girls, and the laid back country twang and slide guitar on the album's later tracks show the Dixie Chicks have nothing on this gal. Jordan's sweet sincerity and musical talent are a pleasure to listen to with lyrics that call, "loud and proud," for an end to the war and the lies of the Bush administration. Every song on *What She Said* becomes an instant sing-along, possessing a galvanizing force that works its magic through sheer beauty.

The Arcade Fire: Neon Bible

Merge Records

reviewed by Andy Smith

What does it say about our times when the number one rock album on the Billboard charts is an anti-authoritarian indictment of wage-work, war, and religion?

Recorded on old-school equipment in a converted church outside Montreal, The Arcade Fire's *Neon Bible* offers an analog antidote to the digital age. Lead singer, Win Butler, left Texas for Canada, so, the album is filled with incendiary epistles littering the expatriate path. The troubling religious overtones of the Iraq war feel the full-force of a choir on "Intervention." "Antichrist Television Blues" renounces the ruinous routine of wage slavery. Butler's angry love letter back to the Empire reaches its crescendo with the wickedly hypnotic, "Windowsill."



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