



Kris Delmhorst

Shotgun Singer

Signature Sounds

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Kris Delmhorst's arresting new album *Shotgun Singer* began as an act of solitary creation. Holed up in a rural cabin with minimal recording gear and a houseful of instruments, Delmhorst recorded her new songs alone and off the clock, in late night sessions that yielded layers of intimate vocals combined with nylon string and electric guitars, cellos, keyboards, and percussion. She treated the work like oil painting, allowing the canvas to breathe and change over the course of many months until the picture emerged. With the core of each song patiently assembled, she brought in a diverse cast of players to add sparse backing lines of drums, keys, guitar, and vinyl-based samples, and enlisted co-producer Sam Kassirer (Josh Ritter) in arrangement and mixing, coaxing him meanwhile to play keyboards and percussion on several songs. The result is collection of songs fully realized and even lush at times, but retaining a hushed intensity, a spirit of lo-fi intimacy and unhurried exploration.

An electric guitar figure twines with the beat of an analog drum machine in the opening bars of “Blue Adeline”, the cryptic and haunting ballad that opens the record. Ethereal vocal layers carry the melody as the drum kit picks up the machine beat with a syncopated line, everything remaining spare and rhythmic until the bridge, where suddenly the pulse lets free and the vocals soar over spacious piano and strings, the transition from minor to major like the sun breaking through fast moving clouds.

From the irresistibly infectious pop of “1000 Reasons” – constructed from various pairings of guitars, live drums, drum machines, synthesizers, Rhodes, and cuban-flavored piano – to the ravishing minimalism of “Freediver”, with its nylon-string guitar, vibraphone, and distorted cello, the songs on *Shotgun Singer* inhabit a fluid landscape where both the music and the lyrics display a decided openness. Favoring perceptions over conclusions, and showing a willingness to evoke emotion but not to pin it down, Delmhorst leaves the mystery of creation intact at the heart of each song, while exploring the transformative power of love, as in “Birds of Belfast:”

*‘Who are you without your sadness?/Who am I without my shame?/
When did all the birds of Belfast learn to sing your name?’*

Or the sense of universal connectedness in “If Not for Love”:

*‘We blow like weeds upon the wind, we hold the ground, we drink the rain/
We throw our seeds into the world before we go the way we came/ If not for love what are you for?’*

With a back catalog that includes two darkly rollicking roots records produced by Morphine’s Billy Conway (2001’s *Five Stories*, and 2003’s *Songs for a Hurricane*), and the 2006 release *Strange Conversation*, a vibrant collection of Americana songs inspired by the work of famous poets (“a remarkable album...as seamless and brave as it is brilliantly creative” - *Irish Times*), Kris Delmhorst has built a thriving career and a devoted following from the ground up, and without major label hype. The same independence of spirit that led Delmhorst to spend some early years working on subsistence farms, cooking on a schooner off the coast of Maine, or hitch-hiking the back roads of Ireland with a fiddle on her back, is evident in the arc of her musical evolution: a willingness to work on her own terms and her own time. Along the way she’s parlayed a decade of successful cross country and trans-Atlantic touring into one of the most distinct voices in American music.

With *Shotgun Singer*, Delmhorst has trained that voice on a series of gracefully open lyrics and figures that transcend genre, ranging into the borderlands between indie-rock and folk, that nameless territory inhabited by such hard-to-classify artists as Juana Molina, Feist, Iron & Wine, and Laura Veirs. Adventurous, elegant, lucid, and haunting, the record is the work of a musician at full stride who has found a musical language equal to her vision.