

Leeds Music Scene

Recorded Reviews – Becky Duke

Band contact: becky@beckyduke.com

Written by Sam Saunders

Becky Duke isn't going to drown in beige. That's her line in track one of "Like it Like This?" Her audience, on the other hand, could easily be flooded out by her bittersweet emotional songs. Her delicious collection of personal tales opens up with the aggressive upbeat track that is so uncharacteristic of the album that some listeners will programme their CD players to avoid it. Once you've got the story – "stuff you lot, I'm gone, I'm pissed off with M&S mumsiness" - the emotional epic takes over. It's the essential but edgy flashback that sets up the rest of the album.

The rest is eleven songs of yearning and tenderness, masterful playing by the band and light, dreamy personal singing by Beck up front and Sarah and Claire Wood in the background. The songs are direct and plain spoken. The poetry is in the sinewy tunes and the gentle music. She has a list of top people playing for her, with Danny Thompson putting in a fully pro job on double bass. Danny Thompson has been at the top in jazz and folk circles for more than thirty years. To his credit he doesn't do the full Thompson thing (you might have heard him sampled by UNKLE). He subdues his full virtuosity and puts in subtle, strong lines that underpin everything perfectly. Listen and learn, bass players everywhere.

The instrumentation is a standard soft rock/electro acoustic thing with extra luxury ingredients, like a flugelhorn and a string quartet. All are used sparingly, with the mix and the detail just right. There's plenty to listen to, but nothing to distract you from the songs. Guitars are treated like the musical instruments they are – no nails hacking planks here. There is some very good playing indeed – mostly by Bruce Knapp who is co-credited with most of the song writing. Every song has its extra aural gems – a bit of mandolin, a few bars of Hammond organ, light piano touches. All the bits that give that goose bump shiver. It isn't ground breaking but it's played with perfect balance and sympathy. It shows how much the young breed of acoustic players still have to discover. Check the guitar playing on track 11 "It's the Way" – Very fine.

The songs themselves are messages from the real world of a grown up woman, making a new life with new friends. It's Janis Ian territory some of the time. It's Joan Armatrading territory too. Becky Duke will be building up a following of devoted fans who have heard her play live and have been captivated by the

mood and the attitude. The CD does it full justice. Start with track two and lose yourself. (if you're male and under twenty-five this might not work) "If You Fall" at track 4 is my stand out track. But they're all good and if you're got tears and memories inside, Becky's personal openness will get them out of hiding for you.

Go listen to Becky when she plays in Leeds, and buy the CD from her afterwards. Surprise yourself. She's at City Varieties supporting Danny Thompson and John Martyn on June 5th and doing a free gig at Borders in Leeds on Friday 25th May between 7pm and 8.45pm. Take someone you feel romantic about and as Becky puts it in track 10: "let your body sing" 9/10

©2001 leedsmusicscene
info@leedsmusicscene.co.uk