

Revolutions

Becky Duke – Like It Like This? – Pixel Records (PIX 101 CD)

From the very first moments of the opening track, *Drown In Beige*, you know you're in the company of a singer-songwriter with enough talent and character to spare. A blast on the guitar comes out of nowhere and she roars, "I don't wanna drown in beige/ I don't wanna act my age." Engaging and caustic in equal measures, she rejects the easy option of trading in hopes and dreams for the predictability of the suburban conformity into which we can all too easily submerge everything we once were or dreamt of being. It's an apt anthem for the gutsy Duke who has taken a big chance with her own money on the release of this cracking album. On this evidence she deserves to succeed and the early evidence – being booked for a slot at Ronnie Scott's for instance – suggests her gamble will pay off and we'll all be winners as a result.

The songs themselves are all written by Duke herself, usually in collaboration with Bruce Knapp, the lead guitarist throughout. After the forcefulness of the opening number they tend to be less raucous but no less accomplished, showing sensitivity and insight in the writing and warmth and wit in the delivery. One of my favourites is *It's The Way*, a deceptively simple (or simply deceptive?) guitar backed vocal that's redolent both lyrically ("It's the dream-like sequence of the afternoon") and musically of the sensual emotional confusion that can come with passion. Other standouts include *If You Fall*, a tender smile and a supportive arm caught in music; the rampantly sexy title track with its echoes of Dory Previn; and *It's The Same View*, a sparky and reflective post-affair number. Finally, closing the album in electrifying style, there is *Can You Hear Me?* Layered vocals, mandolins and lyrical simplicity are carried on a magic carpet of bass and drums to sublime effect. Yes, we can hear you, and we like what we hear! (DM)

*John Lonergan
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