

Wildy's World

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Saturday, May 1, 2010

Rachael Sage – Delancey Street



Rachael Sage - Delancey Street 2010, MPress Records

Rachael Sage has always been something of a renaissance woman. She was good enough of a dancer in junior high to gain entrance to the School Of American Ballet in junior high. Switching to acting, Sage studied at Stanford University and the Actors Studio MFA program. In spite of all of this, it's music that has always allowed Sage to shine brightest. Sage has built her career as an Indie artist, releasing all eight of her albums to date on her own MPress Records. Sage's ninth, *Delancey Street*, is due on May 4, 2010, may be her most personal work to date, and her best.

Delancey Street opens with "Hope's Outpost", a quiet admonishment full of power and grace. The song is a thing of beauty written not so much from anger as from quiet disbelief about watching the one person you could count on walk away. "There Is Passion" marks the autumn of a relationship, when things just aren't as they once were even if love still survives. The song is

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full of longing for a return of the warmth of spring and mournful over where it has gone. On "Brave Mistake", Sage explores love as a dance, using strong imagery to portray not so much the pleasure and pain but the twists and turns that we all fall into. Sage sees the pattern as a way of working things out, allowing us to see when things work out right clearly ("He was at home in every line of her face. It was like ice breaking...").

"Everything Was Red" is a highly personal account of the difficulties of being the family black sheep and being a good sister; full of a hope for things to be as they should be, Sage acknowledges how difficult it is to put the past aside, even if the past is of her own creation. This highly honest and human perspective is raw and powerful, and beautiful in its angst. Any of you out there looking to try to make it in the music business should listen to Sage's "Big Star", a musical treatise on what it takes to make it, particularly for a female artist. It's a very perky take on the wondrous feeling of the pursuit of stardom that takes into account the darker sides of that pursuit. "Wasn't It You" finds Sage exploring the rich history of a relationship where all may not be perfect, but her lyrics are still steeped in immense love.

Sage's cover of Hall & Oates' "Rich Girl" is both amusing and surprising; a gentle diversion in the midst of a rich emotional tapestry. Sage undertakes a bit of escapism in "Meet Me In Vegas", inviting another to come along. It's a scintillating moment of vulnerability. If you're looking for a prime example of Sage's lyrical brilliance, make sure to check out "How I Got By". Sage sparkles with lines like "I've seen the moon sigh for mercy, I've seen solitude break down like some old forgotten junkie I've been wandering this town" and "Sometimes it's hard to ameliorate imaginary sin when you're still stuck inside the distance between nothing and everything."

"Back To Earth" is deeply introspective, a gorgeous song of regret over a relationship mistake that Sage wishes she could take back. On "Arrow" Sage takes a look around at her life only to realize that she is happy, and questions all of those who have told her over the years that she must suffer for her art. On "Delancey Street", Sage references a friendship past in a song full of an ill-defined emotion that isn't exactly regret but touches on its lonely shores. Sage closes things out with a cover of Irene Cara's "Fame" in an elegant cover that takes the exuberance of the original and fills it with a more mature emotion as seen from the other side of fame.

Time and happiness may have softened the edges a bit on Rachael Sage, but it's inarguable that Sage is creating some of the richest art of her career right now. *Delancey Street* is musically complete and rich with personal emotion and insight. It's a brilliant album from an artist who has always danced around the edges brilliance and has now moved fully into its light. One can't predict where *Delancey Street* will stand in relation to Sage's future work twenty years from now, but for the time being it is a peak; like watching the arc of creation as it continues to rise. *Delancey Street* is a **Wildy's World Certified Desert Island Disc**. Don't miss it.

Rating: 5 Stars (Out of 5)

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