



**Tasty is the best description** I have for Rachael Sage’s new CD, “Haunted By You.” It’s a magnificently arranged song cycle, dealing with love in all its myriad forms, featuring lush melodies, resonant lyrics, and Sage’s beautifully versatile, womanly voice pulling it all together.

She showed up at Gemma restaurant for our interview, the very image of the hyper-chic, funkily thrown-together New York artiste, and said, “I really wanted to write a song cycle about passion from all different angles. Obviously, music is perceived as the manifestation of passion, and I wanted to approach the concept from a romantic point of view, as well as others.

“The first track, ‘Invisible Light’ I wrote after the break up of a four-year relationship. I was in that place where I was so liberated on one front, but also stuck. I had lost that ability to be creative because I had gotten so used to somebody else’s presence in my life and space. So that was a love song to the creative muse that enables you to sit down and make a painting or poem, to really listen to what your own voice is telling you.

“It told me to pick up the guitar, which is not my instrument, but which had been lying around in a case collecting dust. I picked it up, refreshed my memory on a handful of chords, took a couple of lessons, and composed this song on the guitar.

“The second track, ‘Abby Would You Wait,’ is about somebody I met at a house concert in Texas. The wonderful thing is you’re literally in someone’s home, performing for their friends who’ve come because they love indie music. I met this very captivating woman during intermission. I’m the kind of person that if I get an idea, I just have to write it down immediately. I quickly wrote it, and the great thing about a pop song is you’re able to expand your imagination. I did see her again and told her about it, and she heard the song and was thrilled.

For Sage, an OUTMusic Award-winner, queer identity is something she has felt comfortable with since coming out in college.

“Luckily, my family was really accepting and supportive. Early on, when I met with some big record labels, they were excited about that and all about positioning me as this ‘queer artist,’ which I just found

kind of gross. So I decided to go my own way and start producing myself, as well as other new artists, and this is my tenth CD.”

“Judy Collins heard my music and invited me to open for her, which was such an honor as she has always been an idol of mine. It’s so great to hear her at the Café Carlyle, where it’s really intimate and she’s totally comfortable, singing and telling these great stories. I have to admit I did not know who Eric Burdon was when he called me about playing with him. My bassist was so disgusted with me, and said, ‘He was the lead singer of the Animals!’ I said, ‘Oh I know them!’ and immediately went to Tower Records — when it was open — and bought everything of his I could. He’s so amazing, at his age, still full of energy and enthusiasm and a love of being onstage. I agree with you that he’s completely underrated in the business, such a survivor who tours all the time.”

Sage, who was born in Port Chester, New York, is a true Renaissance woman. Her performance skills were honed early on, when she trained in ballet but did not continue, as her parents, sticklers for education, put the kibosh on thoughts of a career in that field for her.

“It was hard to accept at first,” she said, “but then I got the acting bug, which was another way of expression.”

Before switching to music, she studied drama at Stanford and still keeps her hand in acting, with a recent Lincoln Center appearance.

“After this, my tenth CD,” she said, “I feel like I’ve said everything I want to for a while and would love to explore acting possibilities more.”

She’s also a visual artist, which is evident from the exquisite packaging of “Haunted By You,” which evokes Pre-Raphaelite artists as well as John Singer Sargent, and her work is being shown at Think Coffee (1 Bleecker St. at Bowery) through June 3. Most importantly, you can see her perform at Joe’s Pub on May 19 at her CD release party (9:30 p.m., 425 Lafayette St., btwn. E. Fourth St. & Astor Pl.; [joespub.com](http://joespub.com)).