



~ LISA BODNAR ~

Lisa Bodnar’s bio is in her music—in the songs she writes and the way she sings them. “What separates Bodnar,” Mark Uricheck writes in his review for NEPA today.com, “[is] the stunning simplicity and accessibility of her songs. A complete lack of pretense in Lisa’s music invites the listener to share in the universal emotions of her lyrics.”

Just listen—she’s all there. But trying to describe her music is not easy, because it evokes a list of seemingly contradictory words: pure, funky, haunting, innocent, ironic, joyous, longing, strong, childlike, sexual, spiritual, aching, ethereal, gritty, fragile, hopeful, wise, raw, triumphant (but never mean-spirited or cruel).

Trying to categorize her music is similarly difficult. Kyrby Raine, of Shotgun Reviews, writes, “Bodnar writes unpretentious pop songs with roots-rock, folk, and country seasonings,” while Mark Uricheck wrote of Lisa’s first release, *maybe i did*: “This music is pop, as in the sense of being easily accessible to fans of many types of music. It’s provocative, thoughtful stuff, but melodic and intriguing enough to catch the ears of diverse musical tastes.” Whatever Lisa’s doing, it works. We want to listen.

Perhaps most noteworthy is a striking contrast between the angelically light sweetness of her voice and the blunt honesty of her lyrics (some of which have unexpected twists). This contrast creates a startling tension that intrigues and captivates us while Lisa tells us who she is. When combined with her engaging, rhythmic melodies, we are left feeling both strangely unsettled and very satisfied—a peculiar sensation that is at the core of what makes her memorable.

In her second CD, *Come Hell or High Water*, which was forged from a tumultuous period in her life and captures powerful emotions of loss and rebirth from that time, Lisa's musical range is evident, as is her determination to survive. From "Dance," in which her sinuous voice seems to slink down the banister as she croons, "We couldn't get past this dance;" to the title track, in which she fiercely announces that she will "get through this, come hell or high water, even if you have to carry me home;" to "Prayer," in which we are treated to a quiet flute with Indian chanting and drumming; to "Protect Our Children," in which she tells us that "Hate lives next door/Protect your children," Lisa invites us into her soul.

Recorded at Kampo Studios in New York, *Come Hell or High Water* is the result of a collaborative effort by Lisa, Dann Araque, and multi-platinum engineer Dan Grigsby, whose credits include work with Keith Richards and Joe Cocker. The CD also features a slew of other talent, including Kenny Margolis and Frank Funaro—keyboardist and drummer, respectively, from the band Cracker—and members of Conan O'Brien's horn section: Mark Pender, and Richie Rosenberg with Eddie Manion, as well as Shawn Pelton, the drummer for Saturday Night Live.

Lisa hails from Allentown, PA, and we first heard her tender voice shortly before the 2003 release of her debut CD, *maybe i did*, a collection of her songs that was produced and recorded by guitarist/engineer Brett Kull, with Lisa on piano. She began getting radio airplay in Philadelphia, soon followed by exposure through Triple A and college and new music shows around the globe.

In *maybe i did*, with its wonderfully provocative title, Lisa moves from deliciously sexual tracks like "undone" to the resolute attitude of "bubble wrap" to the stunningly beautiful "Sunflower" to "fuel called love," where she articulates her heartfelt concern for every soul on our planet: "we are one/in this life/on this plane/traveling round in this world/that we made."

Lisa's lyrics—the soulful expression of her passionate life, truthfully lived and poignantly rendered on both of her CDs—are accompanied by instrumentals that are intricate, subtle, and never overwhelming. The result is always clean and clear, but never simple. As Uricheck put it, "...the production on this CD is pristine. Crisp, punchy, and all around sonically appealing, perhaps the best compliment that can be given to the audio quality is that the disc should be listened to with headphones."

When Lisa and her band played on a cold February evening at New York City's Bitter End to benefit Action Against Hunger, an international organization that provides aid to people suffering from natural disasters, she had no trouble warming up her fans. As one of them wrote, "The intimate crowd who braved the snow that night was treated to a blistering hour-long set of bluesy-rock and power-pop that had everyone on their feet." Another fan, who had never seen Lisa live in concert, wrote of that performance: "It rocked. Lisa and the band kicked it off hard with 'Protect Your Children,' and won the crowd over from the jump. Jaded New Yorkers and hard-core out-of-staters braved the

snowstorm that night to witness the tour-de-force. Lisa’s five band-mates gave Lisa their full support, while she rocked the piano and belted out her numbers a la Elton John—then came up front to rock the microphone. We had a great time!”

Lisa has invited you into her soul. Take her up on it—it’s definitely worth the trip. *Come Hell or High Water* earned her four Grammy nominations, and her momentum is building again as she works on writing a collection of brand new songs for her third CD. She has put together a lineup of powerful local and international talent that will make you sit back and listen—then pull you onto your feet to dance. Check out the fabulous reviews on Lisa’s website (www.lisabodnar.com) and expect to see her on tour soon.

Corinna Fales, 2009

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