

Mp3 Bettysoo - Let Me Love You



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BettySoo plays modern folk/rock with sincerity, and her clear soprano voice will pierce your heart. 10 MP3 Songs FOLK: Folk Pop, FOLK: Modern Folk Details: If there's a care-worn mold somewhere in God's workshop labeled "Texas Singer-Songwriter," odds are it probably doesn't fit Betty Soo. Granted, there are certain trace elements in Soo's music - and Soo herself - that suggest a similar make and model number: the telltale gift for storytelling through poetic melody, the Houston-area roots and Austin zip-code, the do-it-yourself work ethic and stubborn commitment to the integrity and unique personality of each individual song over rote, radio-ready formula. And listen close enough to her bell-pure singing voice, you just might detect the slightest kiss of a East Texas twang. But all that aside, if someone asked you to pick the up-and-coming Texas songwriter out of a mixed crowd, chances are you'd never single out the mild-mannered, 5'0" Korean-American gal. But that's OK. Consider yourself spared the old can't-judge-a-book-by-its-cover lecture, if only because Soo herself never really pegged herself a songwriter - Texan or otherwise - until as recently as a couple of years ago. Although she grew up in a prodigiously talented musical family, by her own admission Soo (Betty's middle name) was the least naturally musically inclined. "I grew up in a family of four girls, and everyone played something and we all sang with our mom in church, but I was the kid who took lessons for everything but never really got good at anything," she laughs. "I took piano lessons for 11 years and I'm terrible. I took violin lessons, flute lessons, oboe lessons, and everything was horrible. And I tried out for choir in middle school, high school and college, and I always got rejected." Finally, sometime in college, she gave guitar a whirl. "I was like, 'Well, that's not great, but it'll work!'" It would be a few years further down the line - last year, in fact - before Soo would get around to writing her first real song and entertain the notion of performing in public. But judging from the quality of her freshly minted debut album, the Stephen Doster-produced Let Me Love

You - not to mention the honor of landing her CD release show at Austin's renowned songwriter's haven, The Cactus Caf - the cautious optimism of "it'll work" can now be deemed an understatement. From the bittersweet, aching beauty of the opening "For Bethany" to the sly bite of "Over You," the sting of "The Memory of You" and clear through to the plaintive reflection of the closing "Family Man" (incidentally, the first song Soo ever wrote), Let Me Love You reveals Soo to be a writer who's maturity and artistic confidence belie her freshman status on the central Texas music scene. It's hard to believe, in retrospect, that it was only under the duress of a homework assignment that Soo, the daughter of two Korean migr physicians, found her true calling. "It started about a year ago," says Soo, now 26. She was a few years out of college [where she had initially studied to be an English teacher], holding down various odd jobs and getting ready to get married. "I was facing all this life-changing stuff and realized what I had always wanted to do but had always been afraid to do was to pursue singing. At the time I was doing an internship at the church where I met my husband, and the woman that I worked under sat me down and said, 'I know singing is what you want to do, but you're not doing it. Why not do it now?' "The problem was," she continues, "I'd never written a song before. So I signed up for an informal songwriting class at UT, thinking I'd find some songwriters who might be desperate for someone to do their songs. It didn't dawn on me until two weeks into the class that, 'Oh, I have to bring my own songs in.' So in haste and desperation I wrote a couple of songs for the class, and they were really well received. And what was really funny to me was people in the class actually started asking me if I wanted to co-write with them. I was like, 'You've got to be kidding ...'" Nevertheless, she ended up joining a local songwriting group, through which she met guitarist Stephen Doster. Recognizing his name from his work with one of her favorite artists, Nanci Griffith, Soo "kidnapped" Doster and told him she wanted to make a record with him - admitting she didn't have much of a budget. "He said, 'I like your stuff, let's go for it,'" Soo marvels. "He's just an amazing guy. He helped me to really believe that this could be a real album. Not just, you know, that first thing that somebody does that's going to be shoved under the rug because they're embarrassed about it later. I'm really proud of it." The 10 original songs on Soo's self-released debut, like the choice covers she sprinkles through her solo acoustic live shows, paint a pretty clear picture of her prime musical influences: Nanci Griffith, Patty Griffin, John Prine, Shawn Colvin, the Indigo Girls and of course her Spring, Texas hometown hero, Lyle Lovett. Also evident is the profound influence of her strong religious faith. "I think that's definitely part of my songwriting just because it's part of me," she explains. "It's just

part of the lens that I view everything through." It was her faith, in fact - coupled with the enthusiastic support of her husband, David Terry (and the admittedly nervous, not-entirely-convinced-but-still-loving support of her family) - that ultimately cinched Soo's decision to throw caution to the wind and pursue a music career. "I just feel like making music has to be part of what I was made to do," she says. "After I got a lot of encouragement from people who liked my singing and my songs, I thought, 'OK, God made me this kind of person, and the kind of person who enjoys doing this, so why would I run away from that?' Not that I think it's going to make me wealthy or guarantee me any measure of success, but I have faith that I'm not going to regret anything. "And so far," she continues happily, "I've really been amazed at how fast things have been coming together. I mean, I've seen people pay their dues way longer than I have, and I know that I'm lucky. I feel extremely fortunate." -Richard Skanse

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