

## Mp3 Marianne Nowotny - Manmade Girl 2xcd Set



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Avant-pop vocals and instrumentals. 24 MP3 Songs POP: Quirky, ELECTRONIC: Experimental Details:

At 18 years old, Marianne Nowotny was ambitious and crazy enough to release *Manmade Girl*, a two-sided coin of a double album (one disc vocal, one instrumental). Nowotny's execution and delivery have improved, and the songs are fleshed out by the addition of percussion and occasional electronic beats that give the record a solid foundation to stand on. She still sounds like a confidently out of tune PJ Harvey; in fact, the floozy carnival rotisserie that *Manmade Girl* turns on sounds like a PCP-induced coital disaster played out to the tunes of Harvey's *To Bring You My Love*. But unlike Polly Jean's lusty neo-Delta hip-shake, there is no rock roll here, no bluesy swagger or soulful inflection, just Nowotny's love-it-or-leave-it voice and her trusty, howling Concertmate keyboard. But even though Nowotny's brand of avant-garde vocal pop can be distempered and outrageous, *Manmade Girl* is much easier to approach than the obscurantic bizarro world of her debut, *Afraid of Me*. Occasionally somnambulant and beautiful, often foreign and incalculable, *Manmade Girl*'s progression is evident from the beginning in "Fountain of Youth," when the initially out-of-sync rhythms of artificial drums and dully ringing piano begrudgingly gather together. That the song's components adhere at all is a marked change from her debut, which accelerated and decelerated spastically and arbitrarily. In fact, *Manmade Girl* is often sweet and lovely, with it's handful of psychedelic prog songs that paint Nowotny as both starry-eyed and wise beyond her years. "Cover Your Mirror" is a prime example of this. While her unmistakable, craggy croon floats over the familiarly spaced-out but beautiful tones of her Concertmate, Nowotny admits to a nihilistic abandonment of her peers' self-hatred and their subsequent acquiescence to the hollow drive of instant-gratification in an empty, strip-mall culture. The song culminates in her sighing resignation, "there was nothing to be said/I've grown up dead," and fades away to the strains of a distant piano. Though a

primer such as the one on the front of the album, which reads "Disc 2 is primarily instrumental soundscapes and stylistic explorations," sends up all the red flags in China, the nine songs are surprisingly engaging. "Poppies," the first song on the largely instrumental disc, finds Nowotny's deliberately plunked keyboard arrangement being sabotaged by a wailing sonic banshee that eventually overruns the composition and drowns it into silence. The rest of the songs trade roles, approximating the character a player piano at the Korova Milk Bar, a synthesizer in a psychedelic saloon, or a guitar exploding in an opium den cum harem might have exhibited. Though they occasionally sound like outtakes from the score to the Legend of Zelda, the instrumentals are just as captivating as the vocal tracks if they are approached openly. That's the crux of most challenging music - it's only successful if the listener holds up their end of the deal and brings a willing imagination to the experience. This artist is for the adventurous listener who was fascinated by PJ Harvey's excursion into the Dance Hall at Louse Point, exhausted by Tori Amos' exercises in heavy breathing, or obsessed with the fallout of that pinnacle of grotesque high-concept marketing ploys: the Chipmunk Punk! album. By all accounts, Manmade Girl is a periscopic, effective, and engrossing critique of a dystopian pop culture wasteland, and the numb, irreparably damaged addicts that passively inhabit it. - Bryan Carroll (AMG)

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