

## Mp3 Leerone - Hail To The Queen



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music, of the sine-wave variety ][ or, maybe, peanut butter, honey and banana sandwiches, lightly toasted on a sunday morning ][ fond memories and a little self-administered guilt 6 MP3 Songs POP: Beatles-pop, ROCK: Folk Rock Details: On the cover of her haunting 2003 debut e.p. "In This Life, On This Road," the Los Angeles singer-songwriter Leerone projected to the future, imagining herself as an elderly woman with fearless, fiery eyes and skin like crinkled parchment. Conceived and shot by Leerone herself, the photo spoke volumes. In a youth-obsessed age where the merchants of glamour have all but hijacked art, Leerone was signaling her determination to grow up -- a notion so contrary to current wisdom, it seems almost subversive. A similar rebelliousness animated the seven tracks featured on the singer's CD. Combining an introspection reminiscent of Carole King with hard-hitting production values worthy of Led Zeppelin, "In This Life, On This Road" heralded the arrival of a dynamic, truth-seeking new talent. Now, Leerone returns with a sophomore outing that cements her reputation as one of indie-pop's most distinctive artists. Featuring six original compositions of surpassing candor and vulnerability, Hail to the Queen once again finds Leerone operating well beyond the conceits of modern pop convention. In her continuing quest to dissolve the barriers that separate artist and listener, the singer has traded in the sure-fisted rock 'n' roll sound of her debut in favor of a nuanced, voice-and-piano approach that highlights the engaging pensiveness of her lyrics. Hail to the Queen is a recording so forthright and unpretentious, it's like sneaking a peek into a trusted friend's personal journal. The disc's intimate sound is no mistake, but rather the result of heedful consideration. "When I was writing my first record, I envisioned how the songs would sound as performed by a band," Leerone explains between doodles on a restaurant placemat. "For this new record it was like, 'OK, I don't have a band, so I'm just going to write the way I would sound live.' It actually made me feel less constrained from these rules I had made up for myself. I

basically gave myself permission to do whatever I wanted." From that self-imposed freedom sprang the loose-limbed assemblage of tunes that make up Hail to the Queen -- the woebegone "Take It All In," the torch-bearing balladry of "All I Want," the whimsical "Catching Snowflakes" and the sprawling epics "Coming" and "Mutha Land." With its boastful allusions to mutiny, child-bearing hips and bad attitude, "1492" is Leerone's contemporized take on the brag songs pioneered by blues singers like Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey and Muddy Waters. "I discovered America in 1492," Leerone croons matter-of-factly, "put a flag right in the ground and set to start anew" As with her debut e.p., Hail to the Queen's cover art is freighted with significance. During the composing phase of the record, Leerone found herself inspired by the symbolism of the lion, an animal historically associated with stout-heartedness and fearsome protectiveness. "For me, this is a self-empowering group of songs," the singer says. "It's about doing away with the expectations you've internalized, the perception that you have to be this or that." For Leerone, Hail to the Queen is the culmination of a dualistic existence. Born in the Israeli port city of Haifa, the singer's family relocated to America when she was still an infant. Growing up, Leerone attended school in suburban LA while spending summers in her Middle Eastern homeland. "The experience definitely changed me," she says. "I think having two homes makes you more open and critical of who you are, because you're more aware of the things that are shaping you." Leerone's world changed when she heard PJ Harvey's grunge-era masterpiece, "Dry." Riveted by Harvey's psychosexual meditations on contemporary romance, Leerone knew her days as a passive music listener were over. "I loved that record, but at the same time I was jealous," she recalls. "It was killing me. I felt like, 'I want to do that'." Years hence, Leerone herself has created a recording that's likely to inspire its own fits of jealousy. Indeed, Hail to the Queen is worthy of the reverence its title farcically solicits. Dignified and quietly heroic, it's a sonic adventure in self-discovery ... and growing up. "I hope that when I'm 50, I'm still coming into my skin, so to speak," the singer says. "I like to think of this record as the beginning of, I don't know ... being a lion?" \*\*Thank you to Bruce Britt, this bio. makes me blush.\*\*

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