

Mp3 Rebekka Fisher - Observare



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Well crafted songwriting with a groove and jazz edge. Interesting arrangements as well as a unique diversity between tracks. 11 MP3 Songs POP: Piano, EASY LISTENING: Soft Rock Details: Rebekka Fisher is unquestionably the resourceful type. When the Minneapolis jazz/funk musician found herself being treated as an ornament in a mostly-male band, she quit and formed her own band. Puzzled by the low number of female instrumentalists in the music industry, she started a networking organization for women artists and began publishing a newsletter. And just last July, after having a hard time getting a gig at a local club, she again took action. She teamed up with other female artists to hold a benefit concert there that wound up attracting over 300 people and raising \$750 for the Family Violence Network. Fisher's strong sense of purpose has been evident since childhood when she began playing piano at age nine. She was the third of four girls. She inherited her father's gift of creativity - Ed Fischer's editorial cartoons are syndicated in over 100 newspapers nationwide and have won him many awards. (He altered the spelling of his last name for FischerToons to avoid being confused with another Ed Fisher.) When Fisher was 13 years old, she heard Carole King's "Tapestry" album and knew what she wanted to do with her life. "I also listened to Melissa Manchester," she remembers. "She has incredible vocal power. I saw her in concert. A couple of times during her show, she didn't even use a microphone, and everyone could still hear her." The teenage Fisher was anxious to put her dream into action and tried to form a band. Unfortunately, she couldn't find the same commitment in her friends and had to settle for songwriting on her own and keeping a catalog of her work. The creative outlet also became a form of therapy when her parents began having difficulties in their marriage (they've since divorced). She took up guitar and drums and channelled her pain into her music. By the time she was fifteen, she wound up playing the piano at a resort where she'd taken a part-time job washing dishes. She abandoned the idea of forming her own

band and joined an already established one. The format? Heavy metal. "Yes, I played keyboards in a heavy metal band," she laughs. "I really wasn't sure what I was doing there!" She spent her adolescence moving from one band to another. Her first real gig, in keeping with the unusual turn her budding career was taking, was at a deaf school. "Actually, it went over great," she says. "They danced to the vibrations of the music that they felt through the floor. The only glitch was when they started slow dancing to our cover of 'Wipeout.' I tried to tell them that it was a fast song, but they couldn't hear me!" Fisher went on to attend the University of Minnesota and earn a degree in Composition. As she began meeting other musicians and jamming with them, she noticed a difference in the professional behavior between men and women. "When I'm jamming with women, they're more cordial and polite," she says. "I know it's a generalization, but so many times I've seen women jamming and saying, 'You do a solo,' 'No, you solo, it's your turn.' Meanwhile the song is almost over! Men I've jammed with, on the other hand, are more aggressive. They'll play right over you." Fisher was initially intimidated by the more aggressive playing style of the male musicians but still preferred jamming with them. Her determination to hold her own in a mostly-male jam led her to practice harder and sharpen her keyboard skills. Eventually, her more aggressive style of playing won her a nomination for Keyboardist of the Year by the Minnesota Music Academy. Unfortunately, stronger technical skills didn't solve all of her difficulties. "When you're the only girl in the band, it's hard to feel like a part of the group no matter how well you play," she says. "I was left out of the 'guy talk,' which is an important part of band bonding. They just didn't want to talk that way with me around." Fisher finally gave up the attempts at bonding when she formed the Rebekka Fisher Band. "I'm more of the boss than a friend," she says of her relationship with the three men who make up the rest of the band, "and that's probably for the best." The Rebekka Fisher Band's first CD was 1995's "Dream World." It was followed by a lucky break that led to 1998's "Observe": an introduction to Matt Fink, formerly of Prince's band Revolution. Fink wound up producing "Observe" in his home studio. "I met him through a friend," Fisher remembers. "I needed a producer, so it worked out great. He's a nice guy. Since then, he's been a guest speaker at Music Tech, where I teach. He's running his own recording studio and writing music for publishing companies and commercials." "Observe" featured a wailing funk song called "A Different Girl," in which she recounts her experiences in a mostly-male band before quitting to form her own band: "I was standing in a corner, behind the lights. I don't rock the boat; the leader gets so uptight. And I feel like I'm living in a vanity case. So get a different girl to take my place."

Not all her listeners were receptive. The press coverage of "Observare" gave Fisher her first taste of negative reviews, which initially made her want to quit the business. "That was really tough," she acknowledges. "This can be an awful business. But when those reviews came out, I was teaching a class at Music Tech about creating a positive environment, and that really adjusted my attitude. To teach something, you really have to know the material and believe in it." As she rebuilt her confidence, she also joined the jobbing circuit, playing weddings, corporate events, jams, and fill-in situations. Again, she was struck by the differences between the sexes. She was often the only female instrumentalist. Most of the women artists were vocalists. "It's hard to be that one person that stands out," she says. "I still don't completely understand why there are so few women instrumentalists and why they tend to focus on things like melody line instead of theory. That's mostly what led me to put together Women Sing." Still in its formative stage, Women Sing is the start of a networking and resource tool for female artists. The newsletter is written and distributed solely by Fisher and includes profiles of women musicians in history (the Fall/Winter 2000 issue features the 19th century composer Pauline Viardot-Garcia). Eventually, Fisher hopes to become more than a one-woman resource center. "I'd love to turn the newsletter into a regular magazine covering schools, online classes and networking areas," she says enthusiastically. "The best thing would be to go around the country and do women artist showcases. I would love to do that!" She knows it will be a tough road. "It's hard to promote women in music without coming across as male-bashing," she says. "That's not what I'm about, but sometimes the very act of focusing solely on women will be interpreted that way." She once placed a bumper sticker on her car that read, "In Goddess We Trust" and started finding pages from the Bible posted on her windshield. Still, she keeps looking for other people to contribute and help her make the organization grow. In the meantime, Fisher has other matters to attend to. She still teaches songwriting classes at Music Tech. She would like to do more benefit concerts. And she and her band recently found the time to release their fourth CD, a five-track collection called "Inner Spaces." The songs have an added, subtle electronica influence, adding more fire and intensity to the already powerful funk grooves. Her new work began attracting attention before it was even released. One of the songs, the cool and ominous "Driving," is being featured on the soundtrack of an independent film called "Vixen Highway." "When I heard the title," she says, "I called to make sure it wasn't a porno film. What's funny is that one of my composition students turned out to be one of the film's directors, so I asked her what it was about. It's a dark comedy, something about a gang of women on the

road who kill a lot of guys and sell their organs for money." Very dark, indeed. Fisher just laughs. "Hey, even if the movie's bad, my music's getting out there. That's all that matters. I'm happy." She does admit that she wasn't so upbeat after viewing the movie's trailer. Attempting to sound tactful, she says, "It does look kinda...homemade." Another standout track on the EP is called "Doot Doot," a sound which mimics the mindless chatter that Fisher feels has taken over the media and conversation in general. "I wrote those lyrics in a crowded bar," she says. "It's a song about stupid people. That song has many different angles. It represents media in general - I just can't believe what I'm hearing on the radio these days." Despite a happy eight-year relationship with her photographer/sculptor boyfriend, Fisher's love songs are anything but happy. Tracks like "Talk to Me" and "Come On In" are about struggling to communicate. "Yeah, I tend to focus on that because of the whole dysfunctional family thing," she admits. "I'm always trying to figure stuff out, and it comes out in my music." Her current musical tastes range from mainstream artists like George Clinton, Bjork, and Beck to indie bands like L.A.'s Slapback and New Jersey band Chucklehead. She loves the freedom of being an indie artist but hesitates when asked if she'd consider a major record deal. "I've heard so many horror stories about major labels," she says, "but I know it would be hard to say no to an opportunity like that. For now, I just love being free to make my own music my way." She keeps her focus on inspiring other female artists, especially instrumentalists, to come together. The fact that she doesn't have a lot of women in her songwriting classes troubles her. "When you don't see many others like yourself, you feel in competition with them. I don't want female artists to see each other that way. We can work together and encourage each other and become better at what we do." With her energy and resourceful nature, Fisher may just be the beginning of a whole new community for women in the music industry.

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