

## Mp3 Rachel Bissex - Don't Look Down



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This sophomore release her influences showing, with covers by Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne, Leonard Cohen and Carol Abair. The production is jazzy/south Indian/spare. 13 MP3 Songs FOLK: Gentle, FOLK: Folk Pop Details: Rachel Bissex, 48, of Burlington, Vt. died Sunday, Feb. 20, 2005, at her home. She was born Dec. 27, 1956, in Boston, Mass., the daughter of Harriet Abeel Bissex and Henry S. Bissex. She graduated from Newton South High School in Massachusetts, and then from Johnson State College in Johnson, Vt. in 1982 with a bachelor's degree in fine arts in performing arts. On Sept. 28, 1985, she married Stephen Goldberg in Plainfield. Ms. Bissex was self-employed as a singer, songwriter and an author. She enjoyed music, theater and community work. Survivors include her husband, Stephen Goldberg, of Burlington; a daughter, Emma Goldberg, also of Burlington; two sons, Matthew Cosgrove of Bloomington, Ind., and Jonas Goldberg of Maplewood, NJ; four brothers, Donald Bissex of Melrose, Mass., Karl Bissex of Plainfield, Vt., Paul Bissex of Northampton, Mass., and Walter Bissex of Huntington, N.Y. A scholarship fund for her children has been established. [rachelbissex.org](http://rachelbissex.org)

----- "Bissex is an excellent singer, an easy one, who doesn't push her voice. The poignancy of her songs is delivered by lyrics well and clearly stated, rather than angst in the singer's rendition. Of the 13 songs on this recording, nine are Bissex originals. Bissex is at her best creating moods, and so the songs "Oh Jackson," "Toward the Ocean" and "Dancing with My Mother" are the most successful. The first of these conveys images of social unrest, but where similar themes in the 60's would have pointed fingers and pronounced solutions, here Bissex takes a different route. Call this a song of the 90's, when forces of oppression, rather than liberation, seem on the ascendance. Oh I see the boys in the neighborhood, oh, anger in their eyes oh, I see the blue lights flashing oh, no hope in their eyes I see the red on the highway they're gunning down doctors oh, I wanna do something. A haunting

interplay between synthesizer and Bissex's overdubbed vocals, atop quickening percussive lines played by Indian artist T.K. Ramakrisnan on an ancient instrument called the Mrdingam, generates an atmosphere of foreboding and helpless concern. The song doesn't easily leave you, or leave you easy. Equally successful is "Toward the Ocean", another mood song. It achieves a misty unity of voice, instrumental sound, image and texture. Like the best of Rachel's songs, it derives from reverie, and passes it on. Interestingly, both these songs are presented without guitar or bass, and thus float without a rhythm in the Western sense, though Ramakrisnan's percussion instrument (which sounds like a drum with an esophagus) provides a sense of movement. The prize on this album, though, is "Dancing with My Mother" which is even better in performance. The song clearly was a gift, from sources beyond this reviewer's ken. Dreamy, ethereal and reminiscent, it expresses a sad but grateful acceptance of continuity - from parent to child to child to child, even when Bissex sings/says the song in concert without help from her daughter (who adds the last refrain on the album). The four songs Bissex takes from other writers contribute an important diversity to the album. Interestingly, though, they seem almost like visitors in her home. Leonard Cohen's "A Singer Must Die" and Joni Mitchell's "The Last Time I Saw Richard" are riveting creations, but there is a bitterness in each song that Bissex seems to borrow; no similar voice emanates from any of her own songs in this set. Bissex also borrows from Jackson Browne's ("Colors of the Sun" and sings a wistful song called "Whistle Me Dixie" by Carol Abair. Poetically they are consistent with her visions, but there is a lush, melodic romanticism in both songs that is distinct on the album - particularly in Browne's composition, which is enhanced by surprising and effective high bass lines by Burlington master bassist Stacy Starkweather. Bissex chooses well in adding these numbers" Will Lindner, Time-Argus, VT

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