

Mp3 Penelope Houston - Snapshot



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Former Avengers lead singer covers some of her favorites, backed by The Maydays, Willow Willow and the Moore Brothers. 5 MP3 Songs ROCK: Folk Rock, POP: Folk Pop Details: The word "legendary" gets tossed around a lot these days; more often than not it's a misnomer. With Penelope Houston, however, it's truly fitting. Penelope was a pioneer as lead vocalist of The Avengers (called San Francisco's best punk band by Greil Marcus). After the band split in 1979, she went on to record 8 LP's and counting, abandoning the full-tilt punk of the Avengers for a folk-rock sound. The All Music Guide has called her "one of the most shocking reincarnations from the original punk era". On Snapshot, Penelope gets the chance to cover some of her favorite artists and some unusual songs. Mining choice nuggets from the late 60's/early 70s, there is nothing from the charts here, and her versions are sometimes radically different. She is backed by Flare recording artists The Maydays (featuring her longtime collaborator Pat Johnson), and 16-track vintage analog equipment was utilized, recorded to 2" tape. Alec Palao (Ace Records archivist and bassman extraordinaire) produced the sessions. The opener, "Maybe We've Been Loving Too Long" was the original flip side to the smash hit "Smile a Little Smile For Me" by the Flying Machine. Bubblegum through and through, it gets a straight-ahead workout with backing vocals by The Moore Bros. "I've Got a Feeling" by Brit folk rockers the Pentangle gets a radical makeover that swings much harder and features some Roxy Music inspired Moog blurts. The Band's "It Makes No Difference" is a bittersweet masterpiece with the incredible backing harmonies of Willow Willow (whose debut album will be released soon on Mod Lang Records) and some lovely understated piano work by Pat Johnson. A heartbreaker. Penelope rewrites the lyrics to "Love Machine" by the Shocking Blue and has a particular snarl in her voice. Another interpretation that veers far from the original - but who remembers the original? The closer, "Though You Are Far Away", is by former Zombies vocal god Colin Blunstone. Just Penelope

and Pat Johnson on guitar, it's a melancholic stunner. That's it in a nutshell, 5 songs that very well may haunt you and leave you wanting more; and that's a good thing. **SELECTED PRAISE FOR SNAPSHOT --**

Jud Cost -- MAGNET Magazine -- Former Avengers punk diva Penelope Houston, who successfully reinvented herself years ago as a folk-rocker, sails through obscure pop covers by British folkies Pentangle and Dutch rockers Shocking Blue here. But it's a pair of dreamy ballads penned by the Band's Robbie Robertson ("It Makes No Difference") and Zombies vocalist Colin Blunstone ("Though You Are Far Away") that allows Houston's voice, accompanied tastefully by piano and acoustic guitar, enough time to smolder like damp leaves burning on an autumn day. -- Jeff Monk -- **UPTOWN Magazine --** Like many of her late-'70s punk rock contemporaries, California beauty Penelope Houston and her band The Avengers created a bit of a stir back in the so-called day - and then basically fell out of view when they broke up in 1979. Houston hasn't been idle by any stretch. She has an arms' length of independently released albums in her catalogue, and her latest is a wonderful five-track tribute to some of her late-'60s and early-'70s favorites. Backed by the talented Maydays band (Alec Palao, Patricio Johnson and John Kent), Houston wraps her strong and sultry pipes around undiscovered Nuggets-era gold like The Flying Machine's mover "Maybe We've Been Loving Too Long" and the Pentangle's laid-back "I've Got a Feeling." She even takes a rootsy swipe at The Band's "It Makes No Difference." Let's hope she keeps it coming. -- Kim Newman -- **VENUS Magazine --** Penelope Houston's solo career has long veered from her snarling roots with the Avengers, one of the West Coast's pioneering punk bands. Her transformation in the 80's from punk goddess to singer-songwriter not only showcased a surprisingly tender yet fierce soprano, but probably heralded the likes of Liz Phair and Tanya Donnelly. On her latest, Snapshot, an EP consisting of five choice covers mining a late 60's and early 70's sound, Houston is backed by the Maydays, a tight mod trio complete with psychedelic Moog synthesizer. And if these tracks were some of her influences, it's no surprise that Houston settled into this less blistering folk-rock sound. Snapshot is a garage-pop precursor combining Houston's past with her present, thanks largely to obscure nuggets. The EP is pure pop bliss, particularly in the opener, "Maybe We've Been Loving Too Long," a track originally recorded by the Flying Machine. The only recognizable track is the Band's "It Makes No Difference," which remains a largely intricate, piano-driven success. -- Jane Farrell -- **Shindig Magazine --** Bloody hell! It's Penelope "The Avengers" Houston! Remember listening to some of their stuff on a dodgy US West Coast punk compilation tape some years ago and being (even allowing for dubious audio quality) not

wholly impressed. But this is completely different. From the Virna Lindt-esque "bobbed blonde in a sportscar" picture on the sleeve, one might expect a 1960s revivalist kind of sound - even more so given that Alec Palao (garage consultant extraordinaire) produces and plays in Ms Houston's back up band here, The Maydays. However, these five covers justify her website biography being headlined "Punk Folkie Popstar", with particular emphasis on "folk" and "pop". The only one that's a little vintage-sounding is 'Maybe We've Been Loving Too Long', which given its origins as a Flying Machine B-side is only right and proper. Excellent version of Pentangle's 'I've Got A Feeling' (can't go wrong with a bit of the 'Tangle). The Band's 'It Makes No Difference' is finally made listenable (but as a Band hater I'm biased), and justice is done to 'Though You Are Far Away' (improving on anything Colin Blunstone has done is flatly impossible, so they're wise to stick very close to the original arrangement). Penelope has a very pretty voice: not too perfect (thankfully - that would be boring), prone to wobble at the right moments, and utterly feminine. Unfortunately it's not a voice that can take being swamped with "rock out" instrumentation - the revamp of Shocking Blue's 'Love Machine' just doesn't work (Alanis Morissette springs to mind - yuk!). But the spare and sympathetic arrangement on the other tracks does. If you want to do an album of cover versions, choosing unusual and varied ones like these is always recommended. And 4 out of 5 is an excellent hit rate. -- Royce Seader -- Bay Area Buzz --

Ever wonder what happens to old punks? The ones cited in the history books for being in a certain pivotal place in time that was perceived to be the "golden age" of punk rock? Well, in the case of Penelope Houston, she has matured considerably. She possesses an instantly angelic voice with considerable range. Miles apart from her previous noteworthy late-'70s group, San Francisco's legendary Avengers, Houston eventually positioned herself as more of a folkie by the time of her debut solo LP in 1987, Birdboys, and has since garnered considerable critical acclaim. She remained dormant for years after her first album but became quite busy in the '90s releasing several albums that showcased her enormously catchy and quirky songwriting. Most recently she has been busy with her longtime collaborator, Pat Johnson, who lends support to her newest batch of songs found here on the Snap Shot EP. She is also joined by her backing band, The Maydays, capably maneuvering their way through the obscure cover songs chosen for this record. Songs by '60s popsters The Flying Machine, Shocking Blue (also covered by the likes of Nirvana), and Pentangle all get the Penelope Houston treatment. Styles range from bubble-gum pop to Americana to folk and are all perfectly arranged. What can I say? Houston is still relevant and still very beautiful. She has lived way past her

roots and proven that she is more than the sum of her past achievements. Inspiring.

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