

Adobe and Teardrops

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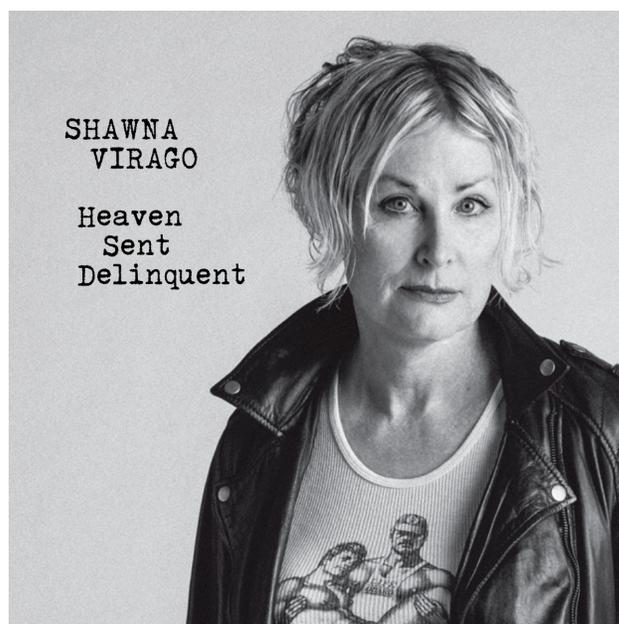
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Posted by Rachel Cholst

Shawna Virago -- Heaven Sent Delinquent

What is a virago, you may ask? It used to be a slur for a woman who had "masculine" traits. Like being brave, pugnacious, and bawdy. I can't for the life of my remember her name, but there was a well-known woman in Elizabethan England who dressed like a man and beat up ruffians. I wrote a pretty good paper in college about a truly mediocre play (there's a reason Shakespeare is as revered as he is) that may have actually had some pretty interesting political implications. But I just wish I fucking remembered the name of the woman it was based on. Point is, there were a lot of people who were assigned female at birth (AFAB) who went around brawling and dueling and sleeping with women. And that's my Saturday night.

However, it is also used to refer to a woman who manages to transcend the frailty of her sex and act nobly etc. etc. etc. like a man.

Shawna Virago straddles both definitions.



Virago's songs are plainspoken, feeling almost like conversations or monologues set to guitar. Her lyrics are alternately sweet and bawdy, delighting in wordplay and blunt -- often in the same song. Virago's most strident on barnstormer "Gender Armageddon," which imagines a world in which gender no longer matters, and the beautiful mayhem that ensues. But I also like the quieter songs that are about...well, not love, exactly, but not just lust. "Bright Green Ideas" (a clever pun in itself) and "Last Night's Sugar" are both poignant in their attempt to make something fleeting last. Virago's addressed the trans* experience throughout her long career. Heaven Sent Delinquent wears those highs and lows like an elaborate tattoo -- Virago's alternate longing for acceptance and reveling in being outside of the norm create a beautiful tension in this album. But she's making sure we all have fun while we're in it.