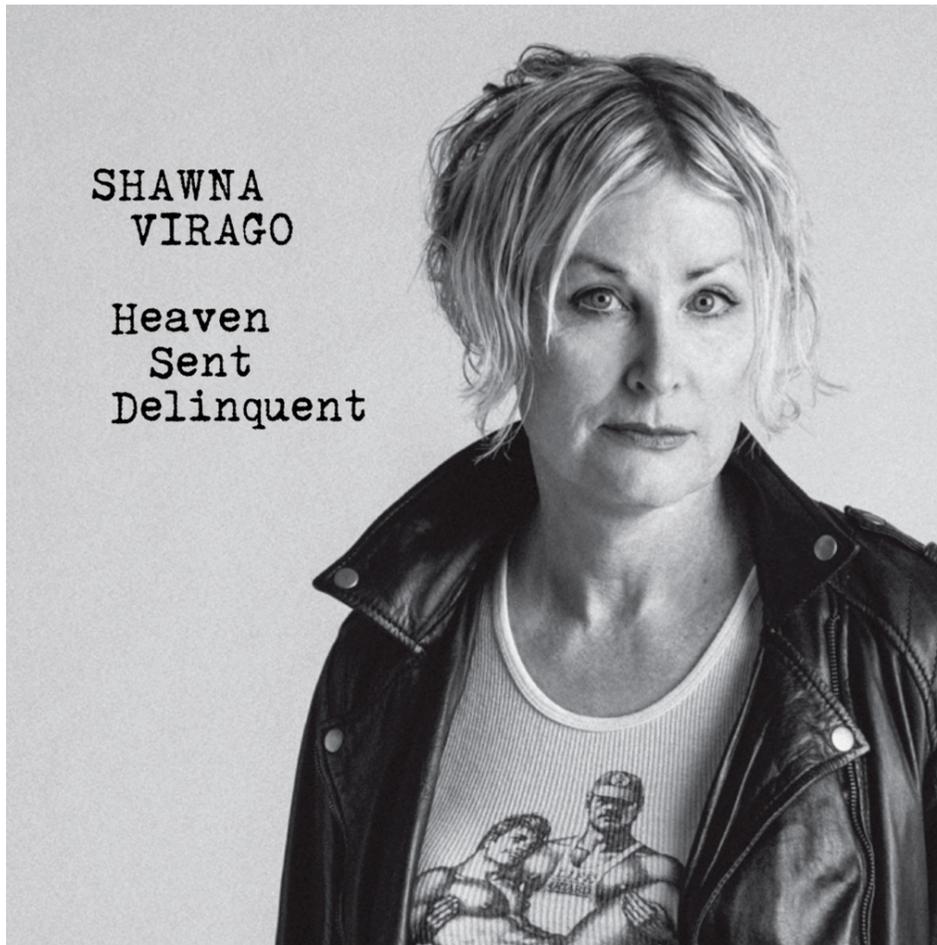


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ALBUM REVIEW: Shawna Virago “Heaven Sent Delinquent”

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Released late last year, *Heaven Sent Delinquent* is the must-hear folk punk record from “transgender trickster” [Shawna Virago](#). The album is composed of 10 solo acoustic tales, that true or spun from Virago’s brilliance, give us plot lines to how she got to her current hometown. “These are the stories of my generation – a generation of transgender people who came out long before the internet, before transgender celebrities and reality TV stars ... before anybody gave a shit about us,” she writes in a press release.

Based in San Francisco, Virago has performed as an out transwoman since the early 90’s. The artistic director of [San Francisco’s Transgender Film Festival](#), she’s an artist of many skill sets, and if you are unfamiliar with her work, *Heaven Sent Delinquent* is a perfect place to start.

When we hear terms such as “Americana” or “folk music,” we’re often flooded with images of cowboys or Bob Dylan – cisgender men. The year is 2017, and it’s time to hear new stories that are more interesting than that you’re used to in the realm of telling tales with a voice and guitar. With queer rebel heroes, with “flame-colored hair, and rhinestoned suits,” *Heaven Sent Delinquent* paints the landscape of your mind with a cast of outsiders on road trips and love stories, enjoying escape with whiskey out of paper cups. “Too many of us were runaways, survivors. But we never gave up. These songs are the stories of myself and my friends. How we managed to find each other in an unfriendly world, fought together, loved each other,” writes Virago’ in a press release.

From crashing cars through the gates of heaven in a gender rebellion to calling out a lover’s fear and vanity, Virago’s vivid story-telling abilities and haunting voice are perhaps best introduced on the album’s first single, “Gender Armageddon,” a song penned as a “tribute to the desperate camaraderie of queer outsiders not afraid to punch back against a hostile world.”

Yet don’t stop there. The album slows down to make way for melancholy on “Last Night’s Sugar,” and she’ll strum your range of emotions on the title track “Heaven Sent Delinquent,” an anthem for “outsiders too timid or shackled by family and economics to make it out of the oppressive towns where they were born” Perhaps one of Virago’s most apt gifts on the album is an ability to blend emotions into song as complicated as they sit within our hearts – and not only make sense out of them – but art. Such skills are evoked on “Anniversary Song,” that celebrates love as much as her own independence.

In our current political climate, there’s been a lot of discussion on how to be an ally and the validity and importance of turning pain into art. If you’re looking for a place to start, support trans artists like Shawna Virago, but not simply for her gender, but because her music is dope.

Stream *Heaven Sent Delinquent* [here](#).

By [Sophie Saint Thomas](#) | January 11th, 2017