

CRAVE

SHAWNA VIRAGO: THE TRANSGENDER ACOUSTIC ROCKER YOU CAN NO LONGER OVERLOOK

Virago has been performing since the early 1990s, but her latest work may be her best

by Josh Helmuth
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Based on the lyrics of her latest album, Sharna Virago has been called a lot of things in her life. Is it possible *she* never even dreamt she would be called a “music pioneer?”

Virago has recently been referred to as such, and after listening to her for the first time it’s easy to see why.

With every melody, with every poem, the transgender acoustic artist puts herself out there 100 percent, and with no apologies. Her newest work, *Heaven Sent Delinquent*, is a solid folk block of music packed with incredible and brave storytelling along with acoustic chops that would make Bob Dylan raise an eyebrow.

What sets Virago apart, aside from being a transgender trailblazer, really is her fantastic storytelling. It’s not easy to bring a moment — or feeling — to life in a song. The fact Virago has mastered the art and still has a way to resonate with everyone — even straight, simple folk like myself — proves her talent.

The album kicks off with “Bright Green Ideas,” a fast, catchy almost pop-punk acoustic track that really does “whisper somethin’ smart in my ear.”

The San Francisco artist said there certainly was an urgency behind the songs on the new album. “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 said.

And if you listen closely to her songs, Virago isn’t shy about sharing her decades-long battles that came along with joining the emerging LGBTQ community.

The singer-songwriter continues this album with strong tracks such as “Gender Armageddon,” “Last Night’s Sugar” and the title track, “Heaven Sent Delinquent.” The latter packs some very powerful words: “Daddy called me a son of a bitch” and “mommy said I was the devil’s daughter,” composing a song that is about an answer to a prayer from an unlikely source.

Of course many of Virago’s songs could be considered a rally cry for the LGBTQ community. But even “Last Night’s Sugar” is relatable to almost anyone, the ballad serving as a metaphor for the things we have lost and yet still yearn for: jobs, home, love. I love the 50s vibe I get from “The Pleasure Car.” And as a Christian, I appreciate “Holy Rollers,” which calls out the hypocritical religious right.

Performing since the early 1990s, and with influences who include, Billy Bragg, John Doe, Jeffrey Lee Pierce, Leonard Cohen, and Nick Cave, Virago *is* the super talented “anti-punk” acoustic figure who’s been overlooked. It’s time to change that.

Transgender or not, if you’re a fan of acoustic, folk or punk music that’s *real*. Virago could be your new go-to. I definitely recommend giving *Heaven Sent Delinquent* an intent listen.

Read more at: <http://www.craveonline.com/music/1253009-shawna-virago-transgender-acoustic-rocker-can-no-longer-overlook>

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