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Shawna Virago – “Suzy Texas (Take Her/Break Her)”: Alt-Country Revenge with Thigh-High Boots



Shawna Virago’s “Suzy Texas (Take Her/Break Her)” depicts a resilient trans woman’s confrontational journey, blending alt-Americana and punk influences.

A cop pulls Suzy over and tells her to “stay outta this time zone,” which is either terrible jurisdiction advice or recognition that she operates outside normal temporal boundaries. Shawna Virago writes “Suzy Texas (Take Her/Break Her)” as alt-Americana with a punk dash, documenting a trans woman who “had to get even / with life before she died” and drives to San Francisco for a showdown with her ex-lover. The San Francisco-based artist has been pioneering transgender representation in American roots music since the 1990s, blending what Rainbow Rodeo calls “a potent mix of folk, alt-country, and punk” comparable to Guy Clarke, Townes Van Zandt, and Lucinda Williams. Her previous album *Blood in Her Dreams* made Billboard’s best of 2024 list, praised for its “ramshackle punk punch” and undercurrent of resistance.

Virago builds Suzy through vivid details: flame-colored hair, rhinestone suit, thigh-high boots that make heat rise off pavement. The song frames her as someone moving through a world that wasn't built for her survival, much less her triumph. "It's not easy moving through the world as a woman. It's not easy being trans," Virago explains. "Some people take the harassment and sexism but the smart ones don't. And she's smart." The refrain "You might think but she won't break like you" functions as both warning and promise, acknowledging attempts to break her while insisting on her superior resilience.

The narrative tracks Suzy's journey from liquor store robberies with her ex ("life was perfect then / just like earthquake weather") to finding him watching strippers at amateur hour while she arrives ready for confrontation. Virago leaves the showdown's outcome ambiguous, focusing instead on Suzy's determination and the fact that "no one could save him now / not even his higher power." For an artist creating resilient music since the '90s, "Suzy Texas" delivers catharsis through character study, proving that sometimes the best response to a world that wants you broken is showing up in a rhinestone suit with a date with destiny.