

FEMINIST REVIEW

FEMINIST REVIEW BELIEVES THAT ALL OPINIONS - POSITIVE AND CRITICAL - ARE VALUABLE AND SEEKS TO GIVE VOICE TO COM. OUR MISSION IS TO WRITE REVIEWS FROM FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES TO EXPLORE THE WORLD THROUGH AN ANTI-OPPRESSION LE FEMINISMS AND PROVIDE A SPACE WHERE THOSE DIFFERENCES CAN BE REPRESENTED AND EXPLORED. (THAT MEANS WE WA

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 2010

Shelley Short – *A Cave, A Canoo*

Hush Records

The deliberate mis-spelling of *canoo* in the title and opening track of singer-songwriter Shelley Short's third album is never really explained, but makes sense on an unstated level. The phonetics on this album take center stage in attempting to interpret literal meanings to ambiguously dreamy lyrics. *A Cave, A Canoo* is a lovely, lulling album that does not shock or surprise in any way. Though the music is subtle and stripped down, large warm layers of instrumentation divert one down different streams. This allows the listener to drift along with the reverb-heavy guitar plucks and nostalgic vocals that are akin to Patsy Cline or Dusty Springfield, yet have a light, girlish edge that makes them more playful than melancholy or dramatic.

Recorded at her home in Portland, OR, *A Cave, A Canoo* has a distinct intimacy. Proudly described in the local newspaper, *The Oregonian*, as "Portland's brand of kooky, curious charm," there is an unmistakable Portland-y vibe. The music has an abundance of talented, dedicated, and humbled musicians who still value creativity over commercial success, and both reflects and invokes the gray, misty ambiance of the Pacific Northwest, which, perhaps because of the weather, pushes one to internal reflection. Sounds of rain on the tracks were mistaken by me for it beginning to fall outside.

The presence of accordion, stand-up bass, piano, and percussion takes individual tracks to different levels—jazz, folk, country, blues—yet merely nods in these directions rather than make a huge departure from the overall comfortable country treble tones. The collaboration with other musicians does not affect the somewhat solitary quality of the album. Other voices and sounds are merely carried on a breeze as Short paddles gently along through her songs.

With this in mind, *A Cave, A Canoo* is an album best listened to on ones own time. The reflective and hypnotic quality of the songs has the ability to quash all conversation except, perhaps, the internal ones. *A Cave, A Canoo* invites you into Short's internal conversations where sounds are more important than the accuracy of spellings.

Review by Jyoti Roy

