

jenifer jackson

The Outskirts of a Giant Town

Bio

Jenifer Jackson is quite blunt with her assessment of her latest record, *The Outskirts of a Giant Town*.

“OUTSKIRTS,” she says, “is a dream come true in the studio.”

She’s right. What she envisioned, what she imagined, was realized. What Jenifer wanted -- and got -- was a live recording of her songs and her band with no overdubs. In other words: turn on the tape recorder, press ‘record’, and play the songs; what you hear is what happened. Nothing slick, nothing fancy, nothing overdone or overblown. In other words: Just Jenifer’s songs, Jenifer’s voice and Jenifer’s band.

Taking a pronounced step away from the impressive layering on her previous record, “So High”, OUTSKIRTS is, instead, spare and intimate, while avoiding being sparse or parched. A truly an in-the-moment recording, Jenifer’s band knows these songs -- and each other -- so well, their ease and camaraderie provide a lived-in authenticity to this mellow-dramatic set of reflections.

The acoustic soul of “Don’t Fade”, the peppy Burt Bacharach touches of “Suddenly Unexpectedly”, the Seventies seduction groove pushing “The Change”, the cascading keyboards on the ballad “Dreamland”, are all artful and effortless.

Best of all, her band-mates know to let Jenifer’s voice remain the focus. Whether she’s sings high and ethereal, or drops down to a low dusky whisper, Jenifer’s conversational, confessional, innate vocal stylings inhabit a song, making her someone you just simply have to listen to.

“I had this idea of how I wanted OUTSKIRTS to be,” Jenifer says, “and I never let go of it. I didn’t compromise -- and with my band and **Brad (Jones)**, my producer and engineer, I didn’t have to compromise -- and I am so proud of what we did.”

Many musicians aspire to having a record sound like a bunch of friends sitting around in a room, just playing their songs -- and go to elaborate lengths in the recording studio to make it all sound convincingly casual.

But with OUTSKIRTS, Jenifer and her band simply sat in a circle at New York City’s **Magic Shop** recording studio and played. They didn’t don headphones; they didn’t pump up the volume. Instead they performed quietly, intently, intensely, irreverently, doing whatever the songs called for, whatever they demanded.

“I’m not a real techie, I’m not into getting headphone levels set. And this time I didn’t have to,” Jenifer says with a laugh.

(Indeed, until her studio time fell into place, Jenifer was planning to record OUTSKIRTS in her East Village apartment. That’s where she and her band rehearsed for the record, sitting in a circle and playing quietly -- with no headphones.) Regarding OUSKIRTS as a document of the twelve days spent recording and mixing the record Jenifer and her longtime band -- **Pat Sansone** (Wilco) on bass, **Greg Wiz** (Joseph Arthur) on drums,

Sonny Barbato on accordion & keys, **Oren Bloedow** (M'chelle N'degiocello) on guitar, and **Nate Walcott** (Brighteyes) on trumpets -- viewed the sessions as "a process of the heart and art."

Jenifer explains:

"Sure they're my band, but, really, they are all friends who just wanted to be a part of this record. We've all been together so long that we are all invested in the music -- the music is the motivation. We were all there to capture a moment. And, sure, OUTSKIRTS may not be perfect, but that's not the point,"

Jenifer describes her producer/engineer Brad Jones as "an excellent surgeon who can make a cardboard box sound good" and doesn't let his ego or his ideas dominate the session. He was there to help, there to solve problems.

And with OUTSKIRTS, Brad was there to oversee four days of 12-hour sessions that, by design, were one-take recordings of the songs -- remember: no adding on instruments later; okay, a horn part, but no big deal. What's really impressive is that a lot of these one-take songs were done on the first take. But as Jenifer points out:

"We knew we could do it this way -- really quiet, no headaches -- because we've been working toward this for a long time now."

As for OUTSKIRTS itself, as Jenifer looked at her life and her career, she found herself searching for a new direction, a next chapter. As she wrote her latest songs she realized that this "in-between" moment was becoming a chapter in itself, with the recording of OUTSKIRTS bringing it all into a tight focus.

And just as OUTSKIRTS was a step away musically from her previous records, lyrically, too, Jenifer has stepped away, with the record offering a clutch of 'outside looking in' songs that hint at the outskirts of the record's title. "This has been a longing and searching time," Jenifer says. "Searching for love, a new place and finding bits and pieces along the way."

Or, as Jenifer puts it in "For You": "On the outside trying to get back to the inside, to you."

Now, however, after ten years of living in New York City, she's heading off to Austin. Though, really, this is a case of heading back, since Jenifer has a bit of a history with that Texas town. She performed there in 1998 with Jules Shear, and has been "in and around" Austin's South by Southwest music marathon five times, as well as the International Folk Alliance.

"I've always had an unrequited love for Austin," Jenifer says, "feeling the way about that place like I used to feel for New York when I was a kid growing up in Massachusetts. But of course there's a pang, as I love New York City."

Jenifer spent two months in Austin last winter and lately she'd been wondering: Can I move there? Can I leave New York? What clinched the move was realizing that she wasn't just going to Austin for her music, but for herself. "The speed of life has become more important to me," Jenifer says. "And Austin just seems my speed now." So then: Next stop -- or, really, next step -- Austin, Texas.

And the next Jenifer Jackson album? "Oh, I have no idea how it will sound," says Jenifer. "But I can't wait to make it."

For Further Information Please Contact:

Amanda Case :: AIC Entertainment :: aic@aicentertainment.com :: Tel: 206.781.3956 Fax: 206.842.5337

WWW.JENIFERJACKSON.COM