

## Kris Delmhorst – BLOOD TEST (Album Review) Signature Sounds Recordings

*Delmhorst's BLOOD TEST is a musical miracle.....*

Kris Delmhorst has resided in Massachusetts for most of the past two decades. On the cusp of motherhood, SHOTGUN SINGER (2008), her most recent album of original material was released. She returned to the fray with CARS (2011), a fans twenty-first century tribute to the twentieth century Boston based combo. Kris' previous studio albums having been recorded in Massachusetts, Maine and Vermont; BLOOD TEST is a 'first' that found Delmhorst return to "home turf" and her native Brooklyn. In the BLOOD TEST press release she recalls "*I was getting coffee at the deli I used to go to in high school, then walking to the studio.*" Brooklyn Recording was the venue for the sessions, and Kris (vocals, guitars, piano) was joined there by band leader Anders Parker (electric 6 & 12 string guitars, bass, vocals), plus Mark Spencer (electric guitar, bass, pedal steel, piano, organ, vibraphone) and Konrad Meissner (drums, percussion). A collection of twelve Delmhorst songs, BLOOD TEST was co-produced with Parker (Varnaline, Gob Iron, New Multitudes), and he recruited Messrs. Spencer & Meissner who have worked, variously, with Belinda Carlisle, Lisa Loeb, Lisa Cantrell and Son Volt.

Kris' seventh full album opens with *Blood Test* wherein the narrator recalls, "*The humming roads, the singing stars,*" and poses numerous questions, most importantly "*Tell me, are you mine?*" The lingering *Homeless* melody is a hands-down humdinger. According to the liner, Spencer supports on piano, which doesn't correlate with the string sounds heard. A life fulfilled paean - "*Years roll along, Sorrow turns to song*" – nevertheless the writer cautions "*Do you know that we're only passing through?*"

A budget for the press, radio and tv promotion of BLOOD TEST was raised successfully via Kickstarter, and on that 'fan funding' web site Kris recalls that *92nd St* was the first song to arrive some eighteen months following the birth of her daughter. It appears that there's a proven correlation between sleepless nights and writers block. Constructed around a short repeating melody Kris' lyric references memories – *Jasmine tea, dirty movies, Monk and Coltrane* – and in the close lines surrenders the punch-line "*Singing all the way to Bleecker, Sweetest sounds I ever heard, Coming through a broken speaker.*" The Anders led band finally displays its collective sonic muscle on *Saw It All*, with chunky Parker guitar chords, soaring Spencer organ support, while Meissner's skins pulsate with precision.

Light as air Delmhorst's voice soars and swoops on *Bees*, replete with a mid-song Parker guitar solo Meissner's pounding drums propel *We Deliver*, while the gentler *Little Frame* finds Spencer double on pedal steel and piano. I mentioned CARS earlier, and Kris explores her power pop chops in the cheerfully urgent *Bright Green World*. Alluding to the heart of the one she/(he) loves, the narrator compares it to "*...a deep green field just rolling to the sea.*" The ensuing, ninety-second long *Temporary Sun* ploughs similar musical territory, while, lyrically, the search for that 'special one' remains unfulfilled. Considering what I said earlier, you might hazard a guess that *Hushabye* is a lullaby. It's not, it's rather dark. Therein, for instance, "*...leaves come down in Union Square, Sparrows fly through the dirty air.*" *My Ohio* is dedicated in the liner booklet 'for Roger Beatty.' A tender eulogy to a late friend, youthful innocence "*I wish I could show you my little girl, She opens up so wide to the world*" encounters death "*The windy day that we said goodbye.*" The latter, penultimate song, is another gem as is the life affirming album closer *Lighthouse*. Such structures furnish a 360-degree view of the horizon, and the lyric mirrors that aspect "*There's a little part of me at the edge of the blue.*"

I should maybe mention that there is repeated reference to red, green and blue in Kris' BLOOD TEST lyrics.....

<http://krisdelmhorst.com/> and <http://shop.signaturesounds.com/album/blood-test>

***Brought to you from the desk of the Folk Villager.***

aka Arthur Wood.

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**Photo Credits:**

L. to R. – Kris Delmhorst and Anders Parker (Credit: Ted Barron)

Kris Delmhorst in the wood (Credit: Joanna Chattman)