



### Dee Carstensen “**Patch Of Blue**” Exit Nine Records

The eight tracks on “**Patch Of Blue**” last a few seconds over forty-six minutes, and harpist/vocalist Carstensen penned them all, although the music on the second cut is a collaboration with husband Mike Mainieri. This is Dee's first, adult, solo outing since “**The Map**” [1998], and considering her, now, decade and a half tutelage under Mainieri it's no great surprise that the singer/songwriter approach of her earlier recordings has given way, on some cuts here, to what appear as meandering extemporisations.

In order of appearance the album opener “Cocoon,” “Details,” “Eviction” and the closing track “Do You Still Want This Dance” feature classical styled, string and woodwind arrangements by Austin, Texas based Stephen Barber, and the sound of ‘all’ or ‘part’ of Austin's Tosca String Quartet grace those tracks. Scour the liner booklet and you won't find one guitar was used in the making of this recording. Apart from the foregoing what you mostly hear, upfront, is Carstensen's voice and harp – which she engagingly finger-picks - or she, occasionally, plays piano, plus input from Mainieri's vibes, marimba and piano.

Heaven knows when I tuned into Carstensen, and her children's recording “**Can You Hear A Lullaby**” apart, I own all her previous releases. Sadly, compared to those previous releases, there's little to recommend “**Patch Of Blue**,” except, maybe, for the bossa nova melody that adorns the album title cut. Otherwise this collection begins, meanders song-by-song, and then ends. And in-between, the vague, universal [could mean pretty much anything] lyrics furnish little of substance or sustenance.

**The Trivia Question.** What is the connection between the appearance by Butch Hancock's Sunspots on the latter's “**Own And Own**” and Dee Carstensen “**Patch Of Blue**,” will undoubtedly become a trivia question in the future, and the answer is that drummer Barry “Frosty” Smith contributed to both recordings.

Folkwax Score 6 out of 10

**Arthur Wood.**

Kerrville Kronikles 07/06.