



Jo Carol Pierce **“Dog Of Love”** no label

Come to think of it, it's rather surprising to recall that well over a decade has slipped by since Jo Carol recorded her solo debut **“Bad Girls Upset By The Truth”** for Monkey Hill Records. On this sophomore go-round the Austin based Texan has decided to pursue the self-release route, and production of **“Dog Of Love”** is credited – the term used in the liner is ‘Driven by’ – to bassman Mark Andes [Spirit, Jo Jo Gunne, Firefall, Heart] an Austinite for over a decade.

In addition to being a musician, Jo Carol Pierce is also an actress, playwright and more and if, at this juncture, I had a maxim to offer regarding this writer's approach to merging words and melody, it would be *‘always expect the unexpected.’* **“Dog Of Love”** opens with “The Curve” a racy and sensual ten-second narrative that's followed, appropriately I feel, by the blues tinged album title cut. A handful of tunes credit David Halley as Jo Carol's co-writer, and a pair from that total also involve input from her husband William DeForrest White aka Blackie White aka the artist Guy Juke. The aforementioned “Dog Of Love” – a treatise on undying affection – is one of the latter, and it's followed by the silky smooth, dreamlike ballad “Naked And Home.” “Carnival Girls,” the second spoken piece lasts all of seven seconds and authorship is credited to Ellery Yates one of the session vocalists. “My Boyfriend,” the first of a pair of older songs featured here, appeared on the tribute collection **“Across The Great Divide: Songs Of Jo Carol Pierce”** [1992] and on that occasion it was performed by Dana Smith and her band Pork [and featured a guest appearance by Alejandro Escovedo]. Missing a few years later from **“Bad Girls Upset By The Truth”** here, with a sly wink, Jo Carol's reading once again conjures up images of America during the nineteen fifties.

Andes and Pierce collaborated on the ballad “Drunken Rain,” and sonically underpinned by Scott Walls' [+] sweet sounding pedal steel “You're So True,” the second Pierce/Halley/White collaboration, is a hook laden number wherein the narrator places all her cards on the table - *“Truer than true as opposed to the merely agreed upon, My need is so strong for you.”* Creation of “Quicksand” which, at turns, features an electric guitar driven sound storm and a choir of ethereal sounding voices is credited to Pierce and Mike Vernon. Vernon assisted with the production of this collection. Waltz paced at the outset “Life Is Sweet” evolves into a lyrically obtuse Pierce/Halley collaboration.

Oddball but nevertheless amusing “Criminal Thinking,” the third and final spoken piece, is followed by the hard edged Pierce/Halley co-write “Rock In My Shoe” a cleverly worded reflection on love in crisis. “Sacrificial Island Tombstone” opened the aforementioned **“Across The Great Divide”** and here Jo Carol delivers a truly wistful rendition of this image rich concoction. In terms of melodic approach there's a Beatlesque feel to the Pierce/Halley tune “Don't Miss This.” The CD back tray insert does not list track 14, and truth to tell rather than being a ‘typo’ I'd almost guarantee the omission was deliberate. “Quicksand” apart, and bearing no relation to their disc running order, the song lyrics are reproduced in the liner booklet with track 14, “I've Got Your Eyes,” appearing on the opening page. Already mentioned in the “Drunken Rain” lyric, the *“Blessed Virgin Mary”* resurfaces in the album closer “Barb Wire Crown” – in fact the songs share a common verse. That said, in the closing lines Pierce pitches a curve ball *“Blessed Virgin Mary Magdalene, Hold me while I'm shattering.”* As I said earlier, always expect the unexpected.

Note.

[+] – Like Blackie, Scott is a member of the Cornell Hurd Band, a legendary Austin based aggregation of country music lovers.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 02/08.