



Norah Jones **“Come Away With Me”** Blue Note/Capitol Records

“Come Away With Me” is her major label debut, and since it's late February 2002 release, Jones' life has been turned upside down and inside out. A star has been born. If she expected financial success and critical acclaim to come her way, I doubt if even she dreamed that it would be heaped upon her for this fourteen-song disc. Welcome to *the real world* girl. The album quickly scored the # 1 Jazz album spot in the UK and # 6 in the Pop chart. In the States, at the time of writing this review, it had peaked at # 17 Pop, and # 1 Jazz. The world outside the merry-go-round she jumped on to, is currently one hell of a blur for this New York based Texan. Five of the songs were penned by Jesse Harris including one co-written with Norah, while Lee Alexander supplied three tunes and one co-write. Harris and Alexander, by the way, are members of Norah's road band. Jones penned the album title cut, probably the finest song on this collection, and supplied two others including the aforementioned co-write. The cover songs amount to Hank Williams "Cold Cold Heart," John D. Loudermilk's "Turn Me On" and the closing "The Nearness of You," a Hoagy Carmichael and Ned Washington standard from the 1938 movie **“Romance In The Dark.”** The main weapon in Jones' arsenal is her voice, and her smoky [occasionally almost spoken] vocal delivery oozes [intentional] sex appeal. Wall to wall, these are love songs, but none of them possess the lyrical bite, or the heartbreaking delivery of recent songs by say, Patty Griffin or Rosie Thomas. In truth Jones leans toward the jazzier edge of singer/songwriterdom, and Carole King and Joni Mitchell are the reference points that most readily come to mind. In addition Jones – or producer Arif Mardin have been extremely intelligent in throwing an olive branch to country music fans with the Loudermilk and Williams covers. Norah supplied the vocal to Nick Drake's "Day Is Done" on Charlie Hunter's most recent album, so folk music chops also lie within her canon. Far from being hardcore jazz, what we have here is high gloss, easy listening AOR. The inclusion of Carmichael's torch song widens Norah's demographic even further. And that folks is where the axe must fall because, Norah may be as seductive as hell on many of the cuts on **“Come Away With Me”** but the bottom line is that, after a few complete circuits it all becomes a very pleasant blur. It may be beautifully executed, but it all sounds the same if you didn't quite catch my meaning. Norah's sophomore album is going to be the true litmus test. Will it be a career where she settles for being an interpreter, or is she going to come up with lyrics [and melodies] entirely on her own that not only steal your heart, they smash it into small pieces ? Watch this space.....

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

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