

Renaissance Point

Ronnie Taheny and the Outhouse Orchestra, Australia (Arty Records)

Ronnie Taheny's first collection in four years display a lush, Eighties-inspired take on her signature, acerbic, tales of love, loss and hope. It's a double CD, a concept album, and while the two discs – Renaissance and Point – have different orchestrations, the sensibility remains the same.

Taheny's voice sounds purer than on some previous albums, perhaps because of the synth-heavy washes that support her very hummable tunes. Indeed, the whole sound is more composed, less rough at the edges, fuller. There are hints of Bangles-style pop, even Bruce Hornsby at times, and while the poppy side is more to the fore on Point, which seems the more accessible, the two discs are still peas from the same pod. In both cases, the tunes work. Thinker, from Point may leave you thinking, but it will also leave you smiling and humming – as will Surface, from Renaissance.

If there's a quibble, it is that the glorious rough, bare, quality of Taheny's voice is less to the fore than on past releases, but in its place is a warm, enveloping sound that seduces you only for Taheny's uncompromising imagery to run its sharp fingernail down a sensitive part of your anatomy when you're least expecting it.

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