Katarina Pejak - Roads That Cross (2019)

1 Nature Of My Blues 2 Sex Kills 3 Cool Drifter 4 Moonlight Rider 5 Old Pain 6 Chasing Summer 7 Turtle Blues 8 Down With Me 9 She's Coming After You 10 Roads That Cross 11 The Harder You Kick Backing Vocals – Lonnie Trevino Jr. (tracks: 10) Bass – Lonnie Trevino Jr. (tracks: 1-10) Drums – Damien Llanes (tracks: 1-10) Guitar – Laura Chavez (tracks: 1-10) Guitar, Backing Vocals – Mike Zito (tracks: 4) Producer, Engineer, Mixed By – Mike Zito Vocals, Keyboards – Katarina Pejak

Katarina Pejak is a Serbia-born singer, songwriter, and pianist who made her home in Nashville. A classically trained pianist, she embraced American roots sounds via her father's record collection and chose a career in blues while still in high school. In fact, her debut album, 2010's Perfume & Luck, gained her admission to the composition and songwriting programs at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where she won the Songwriting Achievement Award. She released First Hand Stories in 2012 while attending, and after graduation issued Old New Borrowed and Blues in 2016. All were acclaimed in Europe. Her recordings and her high-energy live show on continental and Asian festival stages brought her to the attention of Ruf Records, who signed her for Roads That Cross, her first album with worldwide distribution.

Cut in Texas and produced by Mike Zito, Pejak wrote 9 of the 11 tunes for the date. The two covers are fine readings of Joni Mitchell's "Sex Kills" and Janis Joplin and Big Brother and the Holding Company's "Turtle Blues." Her studio band includes the incomparable Laura Chavez on guitar, Jonnie Trevn, Jr. on bass, and Damien Llanes on drums. Pejak's singing voice sits at the treasure spot where Norah Jones, Victoria Spivey, and Bessie Smith all meet. Her songs here engage the wide range of American song forms, from blues and jazz to roots rock, loungey swing, and even Tex-Mex. Opener "The Nature of My Blues" juxtaposes wrangling surf guitars and funky backbeats, while her clear delivery boasts a streetwise persona. Her reading of "Sex Kills" marries her barrelhouse-piano style to a dubwise bass line, stinging guitar fills, and taut snare breaks. While "Cool Drifter" recalls Marcia Ball's New Orleans-drenched piano blues, Pejak's vocal comes right out of vintage rock and pop. "Turtle Blues" is a wonderfully ragged

Chicago rent party blues; "Old Pain" is a definite heartbreaker, borrowing from the Memphis country-soul tradition and recalling the searing emotional delivery of Bonnie Raitt's early-'70s recordings; while "She's Coming After You" marries tango, son, and bolero, then adorns them with surf-guitar trappings. "Down with Me" is gritty, garage-rock blues infused with regret. The title track weds the lyricism and sadness of Tom Waits to spooky country rock, and the closer, "The Harder You Kick," is a laidback solo-piano and vocal-swing blues with a colorful bridge and coda. As her introduction to American audiences, Pejak's Roads That Cross is remarkable: her songs and charts are as sophisticated as they are diverse. And no matter what other musical forms she brings in, urban blues is the overriding one. Add to this an unsual yet extremely attractive singing voice, plus deft, enviable keyboard skills that would wow almost anybody, and you have an exciting artist who is just getting started. ---Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

Sformułowaniem „wozić drzewo do lasu” można określić – w dziedzinie muzyki – chęć eksportowania bluesa z Serbii do Stanów Zjednoczonych, a konkretnie do Nashville. Na taki krok zdecydowała się urodzona w Belgradzie młoda pianistka i wokalistka Katarina Pejak. Choć swą edukację rozpoczęła od muzyki poważnej, to nie udało jej się pozostać obojętną na zebraną przez jej ojca kolekcję płyt rockowych i bluesowych. W rezultacie zmiany upodobań Katarina bez reszty poświęciła się właśnie bluesowi i ostatecznie osiadła w Nashville. Jej determinacja i niewątpliwy talent pozwoliły młodej artystce nie tylko zostać zauważoną, ale też zyskać kontrakt płytowy, co w jaskini lwa jest sztuką nie lada. Producentem najnowszej płyty Katariny Pejak, zatytułowanej „Roads That Cross”, jest renomowany amerykański gitarzysta Mike Zito. Warto podkreślić, że Pejak jest autorką 9 spośród 11 tytułów zebranych na tej płycie i że są to naprawdę dobre piosenki, przypominające brzmieniowo wczesne nagrania Bonnie Raitt. Album „Roads That Cross” dowodzi, że determinacja i wiara w siebie pozwalają na osiągnięcie sukcesu wbrew utartym schematom i porzekadłom. ---Wojciech Mann, polityka.pl

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