

Jennifer Batten - Above Below And Beyond (1992)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Flight of the Bumble Bee* - 01:38 02. *Ya Ain't Nothin' Like a Fast Car* - 04:55 03. *Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'* - 05:21 04. *Respect* - 04:07 05. *Cat Fight* - 02:06 06. *Headbangers Hairspray* - 07:00 07. *Whammy Damage* - 01:30 08. *Secret Lover* - 05:09 09. *Voo Doo* - 04:26 10. *Cruzin' the Nile* - 04:26 11. *Tar-Zenz Day Off* - 05:55 12. *Giant Steps (Jazz Version)* - 01:44 13. *Mental Graffiti* - 01:19 14. *Mental Graffiti* - 04:55 Personnel Jennifer Batten – vocals (tracks 8, 9), guitar, talk box, vocoder, spoken vocals (tracks 2, 12), Michael Sembello – vocals, vocoder, Kali of Medusa – vocals (track 4) Greg Philingaines – piano, bass Steve Klong – drums Shokti – drums Andre Berry – bass Robo Jaco – bass (track 13) Shirley Brewer Garden – background vocals (track 4) Kathy Collier – background vocals (track 4) Bret Helm – spoken vocals (track 12) Cruz Sembello – spoken vocals (track 12) Sargent Mom – spoken vocals (track 12) Sylmarian philharmonic Sylmarian percussion group

The 'guitar shredder' genre of the late '80s was comprised almost entirely of males, but one exception was the fleet-fingered Jennifer Batten. Born in Upstate New York, Batten got her first electric guitar at the age of eight (inspired by her older sister who already owned an instrument, as well as the Beatles and the Monkees), before her family relocated to San Diego, California, a year later. In 1979, Batten began attending G.I.T. (Guitar Institute of Technology), where she befriended such fellow up-and-comers as Steve Lynch (later of Autograph). It was through Lynch's fascination with the then-burgeoning 'two handed tapping' technique that Batten took her friend's lead and perfected the playing style -- eventually writing a book on it years later (*Two Hand Rock*). After graduation, Batten endured an intense practice regimen, while making ends meet by teaching at G.I.T. and playing in a variety of local bands. Batten's big career break came in 1987, when she received word from a friend that auditions were being held for a guitarist for Michael Jackson's upcoming tour in support of his comeback album, *Bad*. Instead of trying to secure a tryout right away, Batten took an uncommon approach, securing a tryout on the last possible day -- that way, she would have as much time to learn and perfect the King of Pop's repertoire. The plan worked, as she toured with Jackson for the better part of a year-and-a-half. She prominently appeared in the video for "Another Part of Me" after undergoing an image makeover, which saw her transformed into a peroxide-hairsprayed guitar

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goddess (she even sported a Mohawk for a spell). With the Jackson tour behind her, interest spread about Batten in the rock guitar community, especially after a track of hers appeared on a compilation CD issued by Guitar for the Practicing Musician magazine, her cover of John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" on 1989's Guitar's Practicing Musicians. This set the stage perfectly for her full-length solo debut in the spring of 1992, Above Below and Beyond, an album that mixed originals and covers (and was produced by Michael Sembello). Shortly after the release of her debut, Batten found herself out on tour once more with Jackson, in support of his Dangerous release (which included a performance at the halftime of the Super Bowl). Afterwards, Batten returned to her own recording career, forming a group called the Immigrants and issuing the European-only release, One Planet Under One Groove, before once more agreeing to tour with Jackson, this time in support of his 1997 greatest-hits collection, HIStory. The same year also saw the release of another Batten recording, Momentum, (credited to Jennifer Batten's Tribal Rage). 1998 saw Batten receive an invitation to join the backing band of one of her all time-favorite guitarists, Jeff Beck. Since signing on with Beck, Batten has appeared on such studio recordings as 1999's Who Else! and 2001's You Had It Coming, plus numerous tours. Additionally, Batten has guested on recordings by Carmine Appice (Guitar Zeus, Vol. 1) and her old friend Sembello's Lost Years LP, among others. ---Greg Prato, allmusic.com

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