

# Vega wistful, whimsical

Suzanne Vega  
*Solitude Standing*  
A&M

review by Mike Spindloe

After just two albums, Suzanne Vega is already a bonafide star in England and has received plenty of attention from the conservative North American music press, so she must be either truly talented or else somebody at A&M has been laying on a thick advertising budget. The answer seems to be the former, helped along by a bit of high profile luck in the form of a hit from the *Pretty In Pink* movie soundtrack ("Left Of Center", with Joe Jackson).

I have to say this: Every time I listen to *Solitude Standing* I am reminded strongly of Joni Mitchell. That's a compliment. Now, enough comparisons already.

Wistful and whimsical are the two central adjectives that spring to mind in describing *Solitude Standing*. "Luka", for instance, sounds like the kind of quality pop that's been missing for years on AM radio, but it's really about child abuse. It's actually quite representative of the rest of the album; catchy but somewhat ambient melodies mixed up with thoughtful and very personal lyrics.

To say that the lyrics are personal is not to say, however, that they are obvious statements of feelings. Rather, they are unobvious statements of feelings. There is a

world of difference between the two. Explaining that would be like trying to explain the difference between good and bad poetry in a couple of sentences (any of you professors care to try?). "Luka", though, is typical of Vega's approach. There are many ways of dealing with child abuse; she chooses to tell the story from the child's point of view. The album is full of character vignettes which draw a fine line between fiction and autobiography, evidence perhaps of Vega's beginnings in New York's folk clubs.

*Solitude Standing* is not quite as adventurous musically as it is lyrically, but what it does have is a groove, a consistent framework that carries you through on the strength of subtle variations of melody and beat. This, again, is no easy feat. A few have done it successfully: some of Van Morrison's best albums, the Rolling Stones *Exile On Main Street* (in a raunchier setting). That's putting Vega in some pretty fine company by most people's standards; she just might deserve it.

*Solitude Standing* is a great album to listen to on a Sunday morning (or early Sunday afternoon) when you're maybe just a little hung over and dreading a long day of attempting to catch up on homework. I know, because after trying to figure out what to say about it for a week, it all clicked into place on a Sunday morning (or was it early afternoon) when I was maybe just a little hung over and dreading a long day of attempting to catch up on homework.



Suzanne Vega: already a bonafide star in England

## Music department plays host to masters

by Pat Hughes

For the past two weeks, the University of Alberta Department of Music has played host to internationally renowned pianist John Wustman, the feature guest of the 1987 Master Class Series.

The series began on September 30, and the recitals and lectures run until October 9. In terms of planning and organizing, however, the series had its beginnings in October of 1986 when the Department of Music applied for funding to host the distinguished visitor. The request was cleared in December of that same year, and the year-long anticipation of the two week visit began.

Harold Wiens, who organized the series and Wustman's visit, says that one of the main purposes of the series is to motivate and educate the students who would become the international performers of the future. By giving the students open, honest advice, Wustman outlines the steps which must be taken for one to reach success.

"Obviously he (Wustman) can't change their lives in two weeks, but he can light some fires and get things going," says Wiens.

Wiens also feels that the series provides a good deal of vocal chamber music, an area not well covered by music courses. He also feels that the Master Class series will boost the popularity of such music.



Wiens evaluates the series so far as being quite successful. Wustman has been very well accepted, and if the enthusiasm of the participating students is any measure, the series is successful indeed.

During his stay, Wustman's time has been occupied by everything from performing at Convocation Hall, to lecturing on the nuances of interpreting musical text, to workshops with the students themselves.

Still to come in the Master Class series are the following: on October 8 at 2 p.m. in the Fine Arts Building, an "Ask the Master" final question period with Wustman, and a final student recital on October 9 at 2 p.m. in Convocation Hall. The series culminates with an October 9, 8 p.m. farewell piano recital by Wustman, also at Convocation Hall.

**LP'S**

1. R.E.M. - Document - IRS/MCA
2. Various Artists - It Came From Canada 3 - Og Music/CC
3. Fool's Crow - Balancing On A Shadow - Criminal/CC
4. Chris and Cosey - Exotica - Network/Capitol-EMI
5. Peter De Havilland - Bois De Boulogne - Venture/Virgin/A&M
6. Wynton Marsalis - Marsalis Standard Time Volume - CBS
7. Various Artists - 20th Anniversary Summer of Love - Shimmy/Pollution Control
8. Deja Voodoo - The Worst of Deja Voodoo - Og Music/CC
9. Plan 9 - Sea Hunt - Enigma/Capitol-EMI
10. Viv Akauldren - I'll Call You Someime - Akashic/US

**Play List**

**SINGLES**

1. Ear Candy - "Self-Defense" - Independent/CC
2. Guerilla Welfare - "Self-Titled Demo" - Independent/CC
3. Bonswater - "Breaking No New Ground" - Shimmy/Pollution Control
4. Love's Laughter - "Self-Titled Demo" - Independent/CC
5. The Membranes - "Long Live Traditional Rock" - Homestead/Dutch East India
6. Skinny Puppy - "Addiction" (remix) - Network/Capitol-EMI
7. Figure Life Out - "Figure Life Out" - Floatation/ILS/US
8. The Fall - "Peel Sessions" - Strange Fruit/Polygram
9. 69 Tribe - "Bikers" - Feralette/US
10. Great Western Orchestra - "Your Image Of Me" - Independent/CC

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