



## Jane Weaver

## Like An Aspen Leaf

Bright Star Recordings BSR16V **150c**

Local Catholic girl Jane Weaver is one of the better-kept secrets of the Manchester music scene and this, her debut seven-track mini-album, is a gently pitched showcase for those smooth alternative folk songs that she pens. While her early influences include Kate Bush and Echo li The Bunnymen, it's more the shadow-like presence of a Neil Young or, perhaps even the youthful Tracey Thorn, who lurks behind these dreamy and softly textured melodies. The title track, with its analogous idea of an aspen tree, whose leaves are noted for their trembling in the breeze, beautifully encapsulates (in a fleeting moment) those pensive and intelligent qualities that can marry the swaying rhythms within the music to a delicate and vulnerable image. The deliberately wobbly instrumentation, and Weaver's stretched vocal, compounds this sense of frailty, which is a theme that is repeated in later songs such as 'The heart that buckled you', 'Ridiculous' and 'Why don't you smile'. A brightly polished production would have been a mistake here. This recording offers simple, yet nicely framed presentations of acoustic guitar, cello, piano, drums and Jane's lightweight (but perfectly pitched) voice. To that end they reinforce the tender naivety of a musician I will be keeping an eye for the future.

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## Nora Jones

## Come Away With Me

Blue Note/Classic Records JP5004 **200c**

Like a good chunk of the nation, I was swayed by Jones' appearance on Jools Holland's show: sultry vocals, a jazz vibe and gorgeous looks, and like that same chunk of the nation, I rushed out to buy the CD. My infatuation proved temporary though and it was but a short time 'til the CD had winged its way to my local second hand record store. Now Classic have released the whole thing on gorgeously pressed 200gram vinyl, winged with deep affection to me by the Editor for my even greater enjoyment.

To be fair, it's not a bad album. Jones' has a lovely voice, is a very adept pianist, and is very sensitively backed by some fine musicians including the great Bill Frisell. The whole thing is beautifully produced by Arif Mardin, Jay Newland and by Jones herself and the CD, no sonic slouch, is eclipsed by this LP which gives real weight and presence to the performers, opening out the soundstage and making the whole thing that much more real. It's just that for me at least, it seems that all this lavish attention has come too early in Jones' career. The songs feel too lightweight, the lyrics not justifying the attention merited them here. Take 'Come Away With Me' or 'Don't Know Why' as the two most prominent



## Nora Jones

## The Nearness of You

Blue Note/Classic Records JP5004 **200c**

examples, or better yet Jones' treatment of the standard 'The Nearness of You'. Here her relative inexperience really shows, the words are all there, the vocal inflections, but somehow the feeling, the sense of convincing experience that's essential to bringing a song like this alive just isn't present.

Nora Jones is clearly very talented and may well have a great future, but for me this record is a case of too much too soon. If you love the CD however, you owe yourself this album since it trounces the CD in every way.

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