**NEW VIEW BY ELEANOR FRIEDBERGER**

*New View,* the third solo album by Eleanor Friedberger, was rehearsed in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Echo Park and recorded in upstate New York. The former is a place where characters in Warren Zevon songs get clingy with their old lady while toughing out heroin withdrawal; the latter is where Bob Dylan got clingy with Robbie Robertson after flying off his motorcycle and revisiting the highway with his face. Fittingly, there's a fair amount of recovery in the songs of *New View* (though you won't find much in the way of smack or motorcycles). "Today I'm frozen but tomorrow I'll write about you," Friedberger sings, and much of the album seems set in that post-traumatic tomorrow, when stuff's calmed down, the figurative road rash has healed, the metaphorical junkie sweating up your mattress has finally packed his bags.

Counting the albums she made with her brother Matthew as the Fiery Furnaces, this is Friedberger's twelfth full-length. I've been listening since the beginning, and to me *New View* seems like just that -- a vista that's opened up when I thought I'd seen everything Friedberger had to offer. (Then again, I believed her last album *Personal Record* was indeed her best to date, so maybe I'm just susceptible to album titles.) Before she entered the studio with *New View* producer Clemens Knieper, Friedberger made a playlist of reference songs. A live version of "Warm Love" by Van Morrison was on there, as was 80s-era Dylan, Neil Young at his most bummed out, a scattering of Robert Wyatt-era Soft Machine, and the odd gem by Slapp Happy, Fleetwood Mac, Funkadelic, et al. There are ghost notes of all of those influences on *New View*, but mostly you hear Eleanor Friedberger. She's never lacked confidence -- this is someone who once took a fractured nine-minute ballad about the international blueberry trade and put it across like it was "Thunder Road" -- but there's a new *kind* of confidence on this record. You can hear it on the warm, stately "Your Word," which holds a special place for Friedberger. She says:

*"It was the last song I wrote for the album.  I finished the lyrics with lines taken from a dream that Jonathan Rosen had about me.  I stayed at a friend's house in LA who had a bunch of later George Harrison CDs-- already a huge fan, I thought I knew it all.  But I heard 'Love Comes To Everyone' and it kind of blew me away.  Everything I love about Harrison-- beautiful slide guitar and vocals and vaguely spiritual lyrics-- plus a weird disco thing.  That was the big influence for the sound."*

The songs on *New View* were recorded live to tape with simple instrumentation: drums, bass, Wurlitzer and 12-string acoustic guitar on almost every track, courtesy of the band Icewater (Malcolm Perkins, Jonathan Rosen, Michael Rosen, Noah Hecht), with Dorian DeAngelo contributing a handful of well-placed guitar solos. Producer Knieper (son of Jurgen Knieper, the German composer whose credits include the score to Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*) gives the album a classic sound, like something that's existed forever on a record collector's shelf, wedged in with Dylan's *New Morning* and John Cale's *Vintage Violence.*

For everything new about *New View*, it still fits comfortably in the continuity of Friedberger's work. By coincidence, Knieper's studio in Germantown, NY where the album was recorded is in a barn that was once rented by Matthew Friedberger and stored the furniture of their grandmother -- the same grandmother whose spoken word reminiscences were the basis of the Fiery Furnaces LP *Rehearsing My Choir*. You won't hear much of that album here, but songs like "Open Season" recall the Furnaces at their most magisterial. The wry, plainspoken "Because I Asked You" builds on the style Friedberger first polished on her solo debut *Last Summer.* And then there's "A Long Walk," the sun-striped finale that lends a memorable afterglow to *New View.* It's a sweet, aching goodbye from an album that seems full of them.

-- SCOTT JACOBSON