



Caitlin Canty – Neon Streets

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Rating: 7 / 10

Highlight Track(s): “Neon Streets” “Shore” “Two Hands”

You can't win 'em all. While New York-based singer-songwriter Caitlin Canty won the right to be a regional finalist in the 2010 Mountain Stage Newsong Contest, she didn't end up winning this year's grand prize. This doesn't mean she wasn't one of the best contestants in the field however. On the contrary, among the sixty or so artists who were selected from six regions across North America, Canty's slightly smokey vocals and down-to-earth lyrics and sensibilities made her one of the competition's highlights.

Her latest EP, *Neon Streets*, is the first of four planned EPs that will be collaborative projects with the string rock band, Darlingside. Canty and the band play well off of each other throughout as Canty's not-quite-Colbie Caillat vocals tell stories of love and loss, weakness and strength, and the myriad emotions and moments that fill up all the spaces in between.

Tracks like “Shore” highlight Canty's insight into relationships that have hit choppy waters, with her crooning about her desire to help her man try to navigate through his uncertainties and insecurities. “Thin Moon” is a sometimes moody, sometimes energetic ode to the changing nature of a relationship that has ultimately fallen apart. And the title track uses the following lyrics to punctuate Canty's feelings of dispassion: “It's not fire til it's lapping at my door/ It's not hunger until it's burning in me/ A bleeding heart can bleed dry/ With so many sirens crying every night.”

Half the time the music and vocals are so pleasant that you don't necessarily realize that the subject matter isn't exactly sunshine and rainbows; it's not death and destruction either, but it's not exactly romantic music to listen to with your mate. The upside to this is that sometimes life is sticky like that, uncomfortable and hard to look at, so Canty scores points for not sugarcoating her content. Canty has a gift with words, painting stark images and bringing sounds to life that have nothing to do with the instruments her band is playing.

Neon Streets is raw and beautiful all at once, filled with pain and longing and yet composed of a strength and certainty that is missing from a lot of today's singer-songwriters.

By Brian Palmer