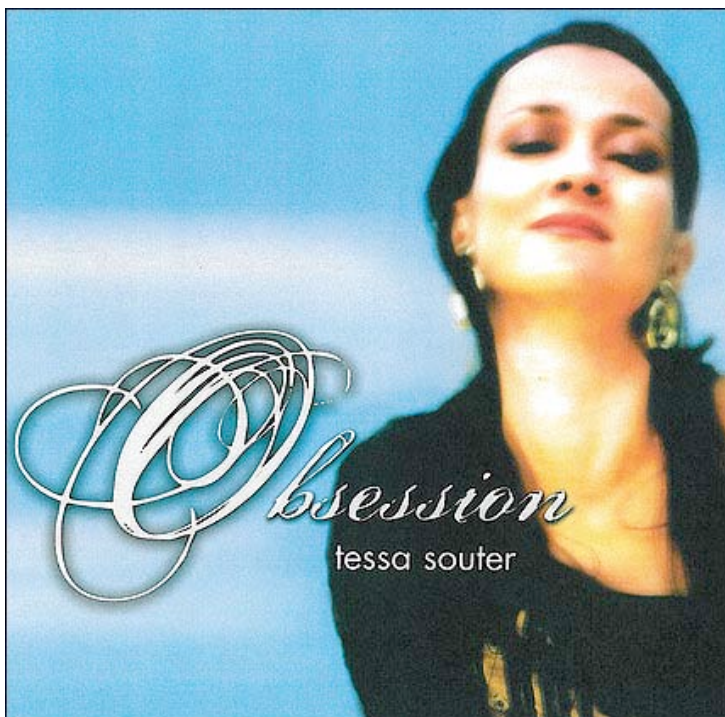


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CD REVIEW TESSA SOUTER'S OBSESSION

By Mike Joyce
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Striking, soulful, enchanting -
- vocalist *Tessa Souter's*
"Obsession" is likely to rank
high on "best of" lists at year's
end. Though the album brims
with performances that reveal
Souter's jazz sensibilities,
listeners needn't have much

interest in the genre to fall under her spell.

A former British journalist, Souter enjoys songs with a narrative thread and poetic allure. On "Obsession," she revisits the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby," Cream's "White Room" and Nick Drake's "Riverman." There's no mistaking her gift for storytelling. Her pure contralto and articulate phrasing are a pleasure to hear no matter the context.

She alludes to Sarah Vaughan's fascination with Brazilian music on the title track and "Make This City Ours Tonight"; both interpretations point to Souter's jazz and pop influences without sounding studied or derivative. Her own compositions, particularly the haunting ballad "Now and Then," elegantly complement the familiar tunes.

The arrangements, mostly by Souter, take advantage of a small, resourceful ensemble that excels at creating intimate yet colorfully orchestrated moods, with acoustic guitarist Jason Ennis and accordionist Victor Prieto playing significant roles. No doubt we will be hearing a lot more from Souter in the future.