

Jazzwise

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By Paul Quinn

3 out of 4 stars

Born of Trinidadian and English parents, in a previous life, London-born vocalist Tessa Souter was a successful journalist and author. Relocating to New York in 1996, she developed her vocal craft at open-mic nights and, following a period of private study with Mark Murphy, made the switch from scribe to singer. This, her third recording,...fuses wildly disparate influences - from Brazil to the Beatles to 'Afro Blue' - into something compelling and utterly original. The skip-proof, 12-track collection begins with the most wistful cover of 'Eleanor Rigby' imaginable, and signs off with one of two arresting originals, the hypnotic 'Usha's Wedding'.

In between, we hear the influence of Sarah Vaughan's Brazilian Romance album on the singer, in both Don Caymmi's title track and a terrific version of Milton Nascimento's 'Make This City Ours Tonight'. Other highlights include Cream's 'White Room' (a song she was about to retire from her repertoire until guitarist Jason Ennis gave it a new lease of life with a distinctive Brazilian feel), and her inspired grafting together of Mongo Santamaria's 'Afro Blue' with Wayne Shorter's 'Footprints'.