



SIETSKE – Where It Starts Again

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There is something very endearing about Sietske: her quiet complexity, her nervous strength and her amazing voice. “I was always ... a very shy person, not so tall and the first response was – you’re such a small girl and such a big sound came out of you. I thought, great, I can be bigger when I sing.”

What made her become a singer? “I was about 10 years old. I played the piano first and in the lesson I always wanted to sing with it and at some point my piano teacher sent me to a vocal teacher. It just felt very natural to sing. It made me happy.”

Inspired by Billy Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Joni Mitchell, Esperanza Spalding, Becca Stevens, amongst many others, Sietske listened to both sentimental singer songwriters as well as music with more complex poly-rhythmic structures– and then developed her own original style. She studied Jazz at the Conservatory in Amsterdam, and at the Boyer College of Music and Dance, Philadelphia. It was in Philadelphia that she wrote *Homeland*, one of four songs on this CD for which she wrote both lyrics and music.

“It was the first time I was not at home for longer than a few weeks. It made a big impression on me, living somewhere else and knowing nobody. The song is about trying to define what is home for you ... I met people who I connected with and got this new perspective ... this can be your home experience wherever you are.” The song *All I need* has a similar theme. “... people are moving around ... there is a lot of chit chat, but nobody is actually connected, so you feel lost in a very busy place. It’s a song with different sections, one is very spacious ... not grounded ... then there is a section which is a bit aggressive, punchy ... which is where you have a certain rejection of all this nonsense ... this non-connectedness ... I’m trying to express these basic feelings ... the intensity.”

She says that she feels vulnerable when conveying this intensity to her audience and hopes that it can relate to the very personal feelings that she shares.

Jan Jasper Tamboer wrote in the magazine *Jazzenzo*, that Sietske “... possesses a disarming freshness and expresses herself with complete sincerity. She’s got all the technique and knows how to use it in a very musical subtle way. Her core-value is communication from the heart; with gentle power she seduces the audience ...”

The songs are both seductive and revealing. *Thousand Shades of Green* explores feelings of euphoria and body strength whilst running through nature, whilst *Gloomy Streets* is about “the sensation of experiencing eyes that undress you ...”

The Sailor is one of seven songs on the CD with lyrics by Sietske and music by the pianist Dirk Balthaus, who accompanies her alongside Marco Zenini on double bass, Efraim Schulz-Wackerbarth on drums and Eran Har Even on guitar. The *Sailor*, elegantly composed and complex, is Sietske's favourite. Set in a railway station, its theme is of a daydream in which you have chosen a different path at a crucial moment in your past.

Sietske calls her music “cinematic folk Jazz”, by which she means lyrical internal feelings set in an atmospheric, scenic context.

Sietske's voice and the instrumental accompaniment are beautifully balanced. She explains: “... we have a variety of characters in the group, it makes the music happen. Dirk is an introvert, but he always wants to play ... making spicy notes as soon as it becomes quiet ... So you can always expect him to do something to make it bubble. Eran, he plays the guitar. He's a very strong character, he's a modest person but he has a lot of passion, he likes to bring intensity to everything ... he's always encouraging the drums to give more. That's Efraim. He's super reliable, can really keep time like nobody else, he's very calculated ... There's always a bit of pull and push between Efraim and Eran and between Dirk and Efraim ... Dirk ... floats a bit more. Marco (bass) is a lyrical player, not just steady, he also likes to make lines, and play beautiful embellishments, so altogether – it needs to be tamed a little bit ... There will always be more band if I don't speak up.”

Sietske hopes that her music is thought about – not just heard and forgotten - and she senses a change for the future: “There's a lot of melancholy in this music. Maybe I'm moving a bit out of the melancholy. I guess it reflects the life situation. You pour in it what's there.”

<http://www.berthold-records.de/>

