

CAT POWER

After years of recording covers, *Sun* brings her original tunes to light

LONG BEFORE CAT POWER RECORDED *SUN*—HER FIRST album of original material in six years—she knew there would be an album with that title. “Before I did *The Covers Record*, I was on tour with these songs that I wrote and some cover songs, playing this *Passion of Joan of Arc* movie by Carl Dreyer,” says Chan Marshall, the woman behind Cat Power, of her 2000 release and tour. “I decided, ‘I’m going to do a covers record real quick. I’ll do these other songs later. I’ll call it *Sun* and I’ll do it later.’”

Marshall, 40, began talking about *Sun* again in 2006 with the intention of releasing the album in 2008, the same year she



Stefano Giovanni

released a second album of covers called *Jukebox*. *Sun* was further delayed when Marshall moved to Los Angeles with then-boyfriend, actor Giovanni Ribisi, and found herself writing at the Boat studio. “I usually write in my bedroom or apartment. I needed my privacy. Psychologically I couldn’t do it with people around.”

However, the new songwriting experience didn’t pan out. “I played it for a friend of mine, a big-brother type, and he’s like, ‘Chan, it’s so depressing. It sounds like old Cat Power. That really broke my heart, and I felt like a failure.’”

Marshall took eight months off from music before giving herself a second chance. This time, she fiddled with the in-house synthesizers that inform much of the album. She often left the tape rolling while improvising on the keyboards, immersing herself further in a process she dislikes. “Recording has always been extremely difficult and painful, like going into surgery with no anesthesia,” says

Marshall. “I never trusted it because I’m not an academic type, and there are many different formulas when you’re in a studio that are ... I’d say extremely mathematical.”

Marshall decided to record and produce the record herself with only the assistance of a sound engineer and a guest vocal from Iggy Pop. She asked the punk legend to join her on “Nothin but Time” in tribute to the song’s subject. “I wrote that song for my boyfriend-at-the-time’s daughter. She was getting bullied. She was really in love with the Ziggy Stardust record, and because of the “heroes” line in the song, I asked Iggy Pop and David Bowie. David said no, but Iggy said yes.” While encouraging someone else to be strong, Marshall took her own bold step away from her stylistic comfort zone. *Sun* now bares little resemblance to its original form. “It’s not a guitar-driven record,” she explains. “I’m thrown for a loop.”

—Amanda Farah

