

INDIE SCENE

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

Diamonds in the Dirt

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Joanne Shaw Taylor has been hailed as one the best blues breakout artists of the last few years. The native Brit now residing in Detroit is a double threat on guitar and vocals, and her 2009 opus *White Sugar* netted a host of critical kudos. Her follow-up *Diamonds in the Dirt* builds on the momentum generated by its predecessor, presenting 10 scorching selections that find Taylor demonstrating her guitar prowess on a stirring set of riveting original blues-based rockers. Taylor rarely bows to restraint, and—the closer “The World and Its Way,” the easily ambling

“Same As It Never Was” and title track aside—the music maintains a fiery dynamic throughout. Taylor’s searing fretwork sports an even blend of frenzy and finesse, often bringing to mind the dazzling pyrotechnics of forebears like Jeff Beck and Jimi Hendrix. As a singer she moves easily from a whisper to a wail, as demonstrated by leadoff track “Can’t Keep Living Like This,” which starts out in contemplative acoustic mode and briskly

escalates to a full-out assault. There’s a hint of vulnerability in her delivery, but it’s mostly marked by visceral angst and intensity—nearly every track is a veritable tour de force. The near-perfect *Diamonds* is one precious commodity.

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