

## SO LONG

### BLOGCRITICS

JON SOBEL 2/9/06

#### [So Long](#) Susan Kane

*This lovely set of hummable country-folk, beautifully produced by Billy Masters (Suzanne Vega's guitarist), has been getting some airplay on prestigious folk programs, and deservedly so. [Kane](#) has a sweetly unassuming but clear and sure voice, a good command of American idioms from country-western to blues to coffeehouse folk, a knack for homespun melodies, and an ace collaborator in Masters, whose guitar work and production nests the songs perfectly.*

*Kane sings folk with a country-singer's voice, merging the pure beauty of an [Erica Smith](#) with the worldliness of a Joni Mitchell. As with Linda Nuñez (see below), if you like this style of music, you will probably enjoy this strong album through and through.*

*I have one quibble. Although lyrics, as a consequence of their dependence on a musical setting, generally sound better sung than they read upon the page, Kane's, curiously, go the opposite way. The simple, rather formal beauty of the song structures and melodies seem to contrast with the natural, tumbling quality of the storytelling, resulting - to this ear, anyway - in moments of diminished artfulness.*

*That aside, this is a fine disc worthy of a place on your folk shelf. Kane and Masters are also a pleasure to hear live, as I learned at a recent show at NYC's [Rockwood Music Hall](#).*

<http://blogcritics.org/archives/2006/02/09/161916.php>

### OTHER BLURBS

"If justice were served, "Susan Kane" would be a household name! Her first album is so assured, so full of wonderful songs, so well-produced that in a fair world you'd expect to find her on the cover of Rolling Stone. Susan Kane deserves a much wider audience. She conquers audiences, one coffeehouse at a time." Jim Motavalli, WPKN-FM Bridgeport, CT

"Susan's pure delivery of this beautiful collection of songs [So Long] leads the listener on a sublime sonic journey." Sloan Wainwright

"...listen closely to the lyrics for maximum enjoyment!" Zoe Montana, RadiolO.com

("Rebekah" is) a remarkable portrait...to set alongside "Eleanor Rigby...." Bob Sherman, Woody's Children WFUV-FM New York

THE GAZETTE

TOM STAUDTER 11/23/05

The singer-songwriter scene here in the suburbs north of New York City has attracted so many practitioners in the past decade that the murmurs of there being a "Hudson Valley sound" are starting to be heard.

Here they strum: in coffeehouses, natch, but also in bars and restaurants, libraries and museums, social halls at places of worship and concert halls in venues of all sizes. With dozens of carefully wrought, hard-won songs they know by heart or a repertoire of just a few originals and covers, the crowd of folk-centric musical artists working regularly around these parts (and farther afield) offer plenty of entertainment and enjoyment practically every night of the week. The humblest of these tuneful soirees-"open mic night" performances-are cropping up continuously, in every corner of the county it seems, and attracting a spectrum of talents, some on the cusp of strong regional popularity, all of them ready to win over the intrepid hearts in attendance who are unwilling to surrender to the cultural imperative of television.

Dollar for dollar, plugging into this scene is the best way to feed your soul. The growing presence of teenagers and young adults at the gigs (which are, for the most part, caffeine-charged), underlines the idea that, as the words go, "something is happening here." It's community building in its purest form, exciting and inspiring, welcoming and inclusive, a true reflection of who we are and how we're faring in this world.

Susan Kane comes from the middle-aged caucus of singer-songwriters presently lifting the Valhalla, NY-based Tribes Hill folk music collective, which has spearheaded the singer songwriter scene around Westchester County since the late 1990s, to national prominence (and thus helping to establish the "Hudson Valley sound"). Listening to her debut album, *So Long*, released in August 2004, it's obvious that she possesses sterling gifts as a vocalist and songwriter, her country-flavored sound a fitting match for the heartfelt declarations and touching narratives that comprise her lyrics.

Seemingly coming out of nowhere, Kane nonetheless has the mature poise of a music biz vet, and that's part of her allure, undoubtedly, to boomers with lots on their minds. That said, then, music fans who know the digital bits of their Lucinda Williams and Mary Chapin Carpenter CDs through-and-through will want to check out Kane. Plus, she's got a local's perspective, too, and that gives her artistry extra credence in the wilds of suburbia.

Kane had just returned from the North East Regional Folk Alliance (NERFA) conference held last weekend at the Kutsher's resort in the Catskills when I caught up to her by phone at her home on the border between Mount Kisco and Bedford Hills. We'd met a number of times over the years, usually at Tribes Hill gatherings, and while she's been hard at work trying to push her musical career I've always been impressed by her unflinching support for all the other singer-

songwriters working in the area--checking out their gigs, helping out with their CDs at the merchandise tables when no one else will, lending glorious harmonies to tunes whenever asked. NERFA stands as a big deal for singer-songwriters, as it connects them with radio programmers and concert booking agents. A lot of the musical showcases don't begin until 2 a.m., and then there are informal "song swaps" throughout the resort in different performers' rooms that last until dawn. "Forget nerves—the hardest part about being at NERFA is staying awake," joked Kane.

So Long met with decent success for a debut album released independently. Over 80 radio stations nationwide picked up on it, not including some syndicated programs that reached listeners at 75 other stations, and Kane reported that the buzz hasn't died down yet. Apparently, WKZEFM in Sharon, Conn, one of the region's top stations for Americana musical artists and acts--has just added a few of her songs to the regular playlist.

"When the Roots Music Report put my album on their Folk Chart, I looked at the list and saw a lot of indies like myself, but there were also names like Mark Knopfler on the chart, and that was amazing," she said.

Originally, Kane admitted, she was hoping to record an EP-length demo to be able to score some gigs and enter songwriting contests with. Working with guitar-ace Billy Masters in between his forays in Suzanne Vega's touring band, Kane cut a handful of songs, "but Billy thought they were pretty good and suggested I write a few others," she said.

Some of the songs Kane first recorded for **So Long**, like "Chicory Blue" and "Truth Will Out," contain "road" imagery, which, she maintained, was appropriate enough. "We're a nation of drivers and riders, really, and here in suburbia you spend a good deal of time in the car. So, it's a universal image, a metaphor for life, and a day-to-day experience, too."

Kane knows suburbia. She grew up in Waldwick, N.J., near the Paramus Mall. Her mother taught piano and her father was an aspiring actor who finally packed it in to sell insurance. When the Beatles hit America Kane asked for a guitar, and by the time she was in 7th grade she was leading her own folk music trio.

She studied economics at Bryn Mawr College and kept up her songwriting on the side, graduating in 1975. After a stint at the European American Bank in Manhattan she moved over to the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, teaching brokers and bankers in the Credit Training Program for several years before marrying and staying at home to raise three children. She continues to pay close attention to financial matters around the world, and in conversation she mentioned how easy credit has "fueled countless personal disasters and supported the growth of the U.S. economy during the past two decades," posing real ethical dilemmas for those working in the banking and credit industries. Her

work also' led to factory visits around the country, "which made me glad to have a college degree," she said, and gave her first-hand look at how globalization was changing the blue- and white-collar worlds. Local governments, she added, "haven't yet recognized" the effects of globalization on their communities and probably won't either "until it's too late."

All this from a Grateful Dead fan. As her kids got older Kane started to feel the itch of performing music again. She helped start a Dead cover band, August West (named for the narrator in "Wharf Rat," one of the group's lugubrious tunes, sung by Jerry Garcia), in 1998, and then worked in another outfit, Bad Dog, that featured some of her original songs. Coaxed into the singer-songwriter genre by her friend Sloan Wainwright, she has been a regular at Tribes Hill and the open mic scene for the past three years, gradually emerging as an artist with a sizable collection of arresting songs and a shimmering voice that can carry country ballads and rockers alike.

Kane mentioned being inspired by the example of Mary Gauthier, another singer-songwriter who "got into this game later in life;" but expressed no regrets for the roads she's taken."You do what you do," she said, "and don't look back if you can help it. I don't view my corporate life as a sidetrack I shouldn't have been on. For now, it's great to be doing something new and challenging. I have a lifetime to draw on for my songwriting, and I'm making the kind of music where you don't need a stylist to find an audience."