

Smoke In The Shadows **— Lydia Lunch**

Atavistic, 2004

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If Lydia Lunch's *Smoke In The Shadows* doesn't somehow scare the daylights outta ya, make you think twice 'bout the relationship between artist and listener, about the way that some albums just move ya', how others put you in a little trance and transport you to a world that you didn't or couldn't know before you dropped the, uh, needle on the rekkid, then chances are that sorta thing just ain't ever gonna happen for you.

Lunch's world is one where protagonists go to sleep with cigarettes in their mouths, sleep on mattresses that have worn through to the springs and guzzle loads of alcohol that has been

purchased for prices that even those beneath the poverty line would scoff at as being too cheap. These people carry knives and other, more dangerous things — weapons kept in their souls and in their hearts — and they're not afraid to use them and Lunch isn't afraid to tell us about why they're not afraid to use them. It's B-level noir in the sonic setting, similar to the world(s) that Tom Waits sings about but in his songs there's always hope that we'll see the golden heart beneath the loser's skin, which is not the case with Lunch.

That said this work is far from depressing and despite its subject matter never plunges listeners into a state of despair. Rather, we're fascinated by this shadow world and all that goes on in and around it, all that can and can't be seen, all that could never be expressed by any less competent (and in her way compassionate) a seer than Lunch.

