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**Lydia Lunch**

<http://www.atavistic.com>

**styles:** post punk, beat punk, experimental rock, spoken word, avant jazz rock

**others:** Tom Waits, Lounge Lizards, Sonic Youth, Blonde Redhead

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*Smoke in the Shadows*

Atavistic, 2004

rating: 4/5

reviewer: christian carey

While Lydia Lunch has reveled in eclecticism throughout her career, *Smoke in the Shadows*, her latest full-length on Atavistic, distills a myriad of diverse interests into a focused and effective album. Spoken word narratives, smoky jazz instrumental arrangements, and noise rock skronk screeds all find a home on this eerie aural document.

Much of the record features full arrangements, contributed by a cadre of prominent avant jazz and experimental rock players, including saxophonists Vinny Golia and Chuck Manning, vibraphonist Joe Berardi, guitarist Nels Cline, trumpeter John Fumo, trombonist Dan Ostermann, bassist Joel Hamilton, and drummer Alex Cline. Sometimes, the band creates a creepy nightclub ambience, as on "Hangover Hotel," over which Lunch intones post-Beat poems in a raspy paean that evokes Tom Waits, Charles Bukowski, and William S. Burroughs. "Johnny Behind the Deuce," on the other hand, approaches the noise rock of Sonic Youth, with feedback aplenty set against fragmentary sung riffs. Guitarist Tommy Grenas and keyboardist Len Del Rio join Lunch on several tracks; one of these, "Pass Like Night," is a particularly memorable nocturnal soundscape, filled with soaring glissandi and haunting electronic textures. The title track puts spoken vocals over a funky bassline, echo-laden flute solos, ambiguous vibraphone chords and jazzy single line piano melodies. A wah-laden guitar solo completes this as a the kaleidoscopic post-psych arrangement.

Other tracks effectively hybridize genres. The title track puts spoken vocals over a funky bassline, echo-laden flute solos, ambiguous vibraphone chords and jazzy single line piano melodies. A wah-laden guitar solo completes this as a the kaleidoscopic post-psych arrangement. Particularly interesting as well are "Touch my Evil" and "Lost World." On the former, Lunch raps over a mayhem-filled big band arrangement with African-influenced percussion, while the latter accompanies her rhythmic spoken word incantations with a phat hip hop groove. You're not likely to find catchier musical experiments than these!

1. *Hangover Hotel*
2. *Smoke in the Shadows*
3. *Johnny Behind the Wheel*
4. *I Love How You...*
5. *Touch My Evil*
6. *Lost World*
7. *Sway*
8. *Gone City*
9. *Blame*
10. *Pass Like Night*
11. *Portrait of the Minus Man*
12. *Trick Baby*
13. *Hot Tip*

