

# The Washington Post

**LAURA BARON**

## "Scenes From the Avenue"

**Independent**

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Laura Baron is appealing.

VOCALIST *LAURA BARON'S* latest release, "Scenes From the Avenue," opens with the title track, a wistful, minor-key ballad that recalls the sort of disarming pop-jazz that Michael Franks helped popularize in the '70s. Whether Baron points to Franks and like-minded singer-songwriters as primary influences is anyone's guess, but it's hard to imagine their fans having any trouble embracing Baron's low-key, jazz-tinted musings.

Blues, again pitched soft and low, also plays a significant role in Baron's repertoire. But as the languid "Kindness Don't Rest Easy" illustrates, she's more interested in providing comfort than in issuing complaints. (The suggestive "Laundry Man Blues" could qualify as an exception if it weren't so clearly intended to provoke laughs.) When the mood shifts, Baron's obvious affection for Antonio Carlos Jobim becomes apparent in a variety of ways. Vocally well-suited to the task, she salutes the late composer via a brisk and engaging rendition of "No More Blues."

Most of the songwriting on "Scenes From the Avenue" is so appealing that you don't find yourself wishing that Baron would cover pop classics. Her glowing rendition of "Skylark," brightly accented by guitarist Sol Creech, is certainly welcome, though. In fact, Baron is in good company throughout the album, collaborating with several gifted musicians, including multi-instrumentalist (and the album's producer) Bobby Read, flugelhornist John D'earth and drummer Robert Jospe.

-- **Mike Joyce**

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