

"Solitude Standing"
Suzanne Vega
A&M Records
★★★★½

There are few popular music artists whose lyrics, without the aid of music, can stand up to serious scrutiny. John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Bob Dylan, Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen are some who have written lyrics that would be worthy of study in a college-level English course. To that list add Suzanne Vega.

Vega is somewhat of an anachronism — an acoustic guitar-strumming folk singer — in these days of high-tech rock. But her soft, pleasing voice and brilliant, incisive lyrics are so refreshing that you are usually left wanting more.

Unlike most singer-songwriters of the '70s who spent so much time writing prententiously obscure lyrics that they couldn't come up with anything more than a boring drone of piano and guitar for backup, Vega can write music that is as engaging and memorable as her lyrics.

Vega worked her way up through Greenwich Village

coffee houses and folk clubs during the late '70s and early '80s before she landed a recording contract in 1985. Her first album, "Suzanne Vega," sold well and won critical acclaim. Last year her "Left of Center," a song she wrote for John Hughes' film "Pretty in Pink," and her duet with Pat DiNizio on the Smithereens' "In a Lonely Place," both did well on the charts.

"Solitude Standing" is a collection of Vega's songs that date back to 1978. The album suffers slightly in that there is no cohesive structure to the music like there was on her debut album. But most of the songs are so powerful that they are able to stand on their own.

The New York City streets provide the inspiration for the acappella "Tom's Diner" and "Ironbound/Fancy Poultry." "Tom's Diner (Reprise)," an instrumental version of the first tune, shows how well Vega's sidemen, guitarist Marc Shulman, bassist Michael Visceglia, keyboardist Anton Sanko and drummer Stephen Ferrera, can flesh out her musical ideas.

Vega has a way of looking at

love affairs that rivals Elvis Costello's sense of cynicism. In "In the Eye," Vega tells her lover that she will not play the part of the submissive partner and accept the breakup until she makes sure he feels as much pain as she does. In "Calypso," Vega lets another lover go, not because she has stopped loving him, but because she wants him to continue his life. "Solitude Standing" has Vega facing loneliness that has come disguised as her other self.

"Gypsy," like "Undertow" from Vega's first album, describes a relationship in which the woman will allow the man to drop the traditional sexual role in order that both partners may benefit.

"Night Vision," inspired by Paul Eluard's poem "Juan Gris," is the best representation of a still-life painting set to music that I've ever heard. "Language," probably inspired by William S. Burroughs, shows the inadequacy of words to fully express thoughts and feelings.

The most overpowering songs on "Solitude Standing" are about children. "Luka" is

the story of child abuse as told by the abused child. Vega's lyrics capture the confusion and frustration that an abused child feels while the upbeat music seems to reflect some type of childlike innocence. "Wooden Horse (Caspar Hauser's Song)" is based on the story of a 17-year-old German boy found wandering the streets of Nuremberg in the 19th century. Nothing was

known about the boy except that he had been locked up in a basement since he was an infant. The song shows an imagination that has grown tremendously due to isolation.

"Solitude Standing" shows two things about Suzanne Vega. First of all it shows that she has great talent as a singer and a songwriter. Secondly it shows that she has great promise for the future.

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Howdy! Here it is, another week later. Time is ticking away and you're in need of some serious fun. Best Bets is set up to provide you with unique entertainment opportunities which can be reached with little difficulty. If your agency or group has a unique event coming up, let us know by calling *At Ease* at 845-3312.

Saturday, June 27

Motorcycle Racing: The Central Road Racing Club will thrill you with motorcycle racing at the Texas World Speedway. Gates open at 7 a.m. and the four hour endurance race will begin at 11:30 a.m., rain or shine. Admission is \$7 for one day or \$12 for Saturday and Sunday.

Harvest Preparation: Messina Hof Wine Cellars on Old Reliance Road offers this tour of the winery this week. Admission is free, but reservations must be made ahead of time. The number is 778-WINE.

Sunday, June 28

Motorcycle Racing: Texas World Speedway gates open at 7 a.m. and national sprints begin at 11:30 a.m. Admission is \$7.

The fourth of July is just around the corner and plans for a great weekend should begin now. If you're going out of town, you might want to make lodging reservations and think about what you're going to do for entertainment. If you're staying around town, you might want to consider swimming at the Bryan Aquatic Center from noon until 8 p.m. Stay close for future information on upcoming events.

One of the hottest stars in the country music field will soon be in our midst. Gary Morris is performing in Brenham, July 10, at the Silver Wings Ballroom. The performance is from 8 p.m. to midnight and the Texas Unlimited Band will also appear. If you're interested, you might want to buy tickets early. Advance tickets are \$10 and can be bought at all Courts Western Wear Stores.

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