

Dept. Of Good Evil Feat. Rachel Z

SAVOY
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Rachel Z has proven herself to be an exceptional acoustic jazz pianist. Her new simpatico trio, Dept. Of Good And Evil, goes further in establishing her cred. Oddly enough, given her occasional fondness for flash, Z never gives in to simple pyrotechnics on this eponymous CD.

Z's Touch on the keys is supple and dark, her melodic logic wonderfully coherent, and she improvises in long, lush phrases that can surprise and captivate. Moments of either inspired vision or extremely well-rehearsed note choices fill the album, such as the chordal melody "ESP," the introductory flurries in "King of Pain" (followed by chords that recall Don Grolnick's "Pools"), the Herbie Hancock-esque crunch of "Love Will Tear Us Apart" and the delicate flourishes of "Lakme."

Z's pop inclination also gives her performances purpose and appeal. The piano solos, ensemble sections and arrangements are form-fitting and weighty. The album is certainly accessible, from Z's generous, flowing piano lines and sensual vocal tracks to the drumming of Bobbie Rae, who fills the music with percussive effects and r&b fired grooves. **Some may accuse Rachel of populist goals, but rich melodies and engrossing trio performances silence the naysayers.**