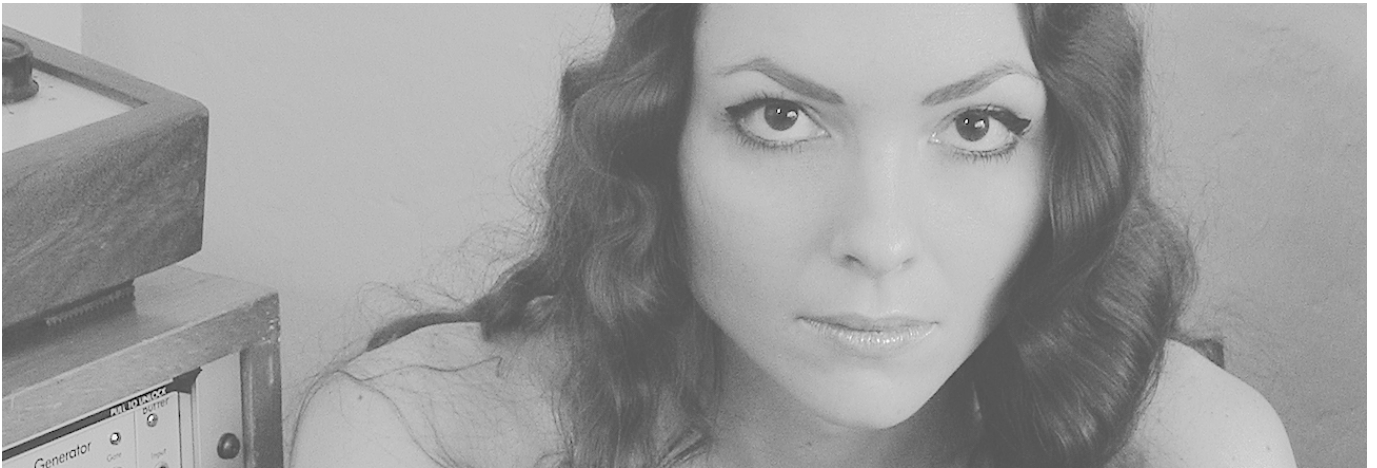


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GRACE AND DANGER – CARY GRACE SHAKES DOWN DAVID BOWIE

The Duke is dead. Long live the Duke. This could easily have been the mantra etched in stardust on the studio walls as **Cary Grace** wrapped her dark-brown voice around two of David Bowie's most clearly datestamped songs. She will shortly release her highly idiosyncratic versions of *Black Country Rock* and *Sound and Vision*

on a unique 8" Schallplatte on the venerable *Fruits de Mer* label, and I am here to recommend her work.

Cary Grace is from North Carolina and lived for a time in Nashville, but her musical interests are at a remove from country store Americana, or store-bought country swing. She's a synthesizer gal from her oscillators to her envelopes, and her solo output has often been experimental and improvisational in nature. Nevertheless, her treatment of these two Bowie gems is noteworthy for her affecting vocals rather than special effects.

The tunes she's picked bookmark the pre and post Ziggy periods of the late David Bowie's fame trajectory, which began with an itch that later became an irritating sore. Amidst all of the imagery that David Jones generated around his many selling points as David Bowie the global star, the songs still gleam invitingly. Many a coiffured crooner has already jumped up to grab a tear-stained microphone in a karaoke tribute, but what could make it all worthwhile would be to re-imagine the songs with love and care, and a bit of style.



Black Country Rock featured on *The Man Who Sold The World* as a beef stew potboiler with an effete vocal that suggested Bowie was shaping the camp, contrary and lucrative persona yet to come. Here, it's a country girl from the southern United States who gives his intractable creature life, mainly by replacing the lumpen gait of the original with concentrated energy and a strident vocal delivery. That song (like *She Shook Me Cold*) always seemed like such a terribly unpolished stone to me, but Cary Grace puts a shine on this

impudent little gem and re-states it as an incredibly accomplished rock melody. Devotees may think it a bit presumptuous for anyone to give a Bowie song a bit of a seeing to, but Ms. Grace shakes it up (and down) good and proper.

There is a very long intro to her take on *Sound and Vision*, but Grace's timing is proved to be perfectly correct when her voice finally punches in. It's a great example of an artist daring to build tension to dangerous levels, almost (but not quite) to the point where you can't stand it anymore. The expectancy is even worse/better when the song is one of those soundtrack-of-your-life lyric/melody combinations that pops into your head unbidden at the most incongruous moments. "Blue-blue-lectric-blue" is simply the colour of saying, and it underscores the suggestive value of employing words for their own sake.

Bowie of course knew that hooking you into his world was one of his principal gifts and those closest to him knew it too. Why else would they take the time and trouble to use his Twitter feed to strafe the ether with some of his most unforgettable couplets? A social media account might seem like a trite place to mark milestones in a life's work, but a great pop song is all about the *instant* communication of ideas and sensations through words and music.

Cary Grace has done these songs a great service by bringing a confident, firm female voice to bear upon the innate femininity of Bowie's songwriting oeuvre, and she hints strongly that a man's dress still looks better on a woman. I think that Bowie would have liked the electronica that filters in and out of these arrangements, and segues into another interpretation of *Sound and Vision* by Consterdine. It's pleasantly confusing and it rings out the bold ch-ch-changes that he advocated so emphatically.

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BLACK COUNTRY ROCK/SOUND AND VISION BY CARY GRACE/CONSTERDINE IS AVAILABLE AS A VERY LIMITED VINYL EDITION AT THE FRUITS DE MER GAMES FOR MAY GIG ON 29TH MAY AT THE HALF MOON IN PUTNEY, LONDON.

FRUITSDEMERRECORDS.COM

WWW.CARYGRACE.COM

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