



# EXENE CERVENKA Somewhere gone

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The foundation of the best punk rock, the music that lasts and remains relevant, isn't self-destructive anger or smash the state bravado, but a sense of alienation and dislocation. The longing of the outsider. No band epitomized the burst of creativity and energy in this essential awareness better than **X** and their singer and co-lyricist **Exene Cervenka**. And even though the expressions of fiery emotions and actions of youth fade or moderate, the search for a roadmap through the desolation persists, and it is why Exene's distinctive lyricism still resonates.

*Somewhere Gone*, **Exene's first solo album since 1991**, is a sometimes dreamy but always intimate, circuitous passage through folk and country; subdued, but no less edgy. Invoking other artists who travel easily between the worlds of words and music like Leonard Cohen and Patti Smith, Exene's lyrics and immediately recognizable, simultaneously fragile and totemic vocals carry all the passion of X without all the loud.

Possessing the eye and heart of a poet, Exene subverts lyrical expectations to create an atmosphere of both strain and empathy, speaking to the isolated and forsaken romantic in all of us. Hers is a world of the natural and the elemental intermingling with our lives and loves. The gravityless drone of "Surface of the Sun" or *swimming in the wind* to escape the hurricanes of "Somewhere Gone" paint our struggles in an ethereal light.

Throughout, lines such as *Be still my beating bat wings* ("Where Do We Go From Here"), *I'm trying to make an honest mistake/out of you* ("Honest Mistake") or *You*

*can have what's left of my forever* ("Fine Familiar") cast a murky light on the sentimental. Simple poetic juxtapositions heighten the dislocation that haunt us. *Glass full of empty* ("Sound of Coming Down"), *Blackness and limelight* ("Somewhere Gone") as well as the album title itself speak to this tension.

Sonically, *Somewhere Gone* is a sometimes sparse, sometimes exuberant blend of folk, deep country and wide-open spaces. Exene's guitar playing (she plays on most of the songs) and the somber cello/viola of **Amy Farris** (Dave Alvin's Guilty Women, Alejandro Escovedo, Kelly Willis) give the title track a sense of urgency, while the far-out west reverb and back pew organ of "Sound of Coming Down" are as liberating as a freefall. On the only song not written by Exene, an ancient ballad of the hills "The Willow Tree," she duets with Amy and the chill and ache of the ages is in it; the hope that lies in the dirt. Also lending ample their handiwork is **Joe Terry** (Skeletons, Moreells) on barrelhouse piano, producer **Lou Whitney** (Skeletons) on bass, **Dex Romweber** (Dex Romweber Duo, Flat Duo Jets) on keyboards, **Cindy Wasserman** (Dead Rock West) and **Jason Edge** on guitar.

Exene Cervenka is a genuine icon and inspiration to a generation of music fans. In addition to her 30 year body of work with X, she was a guiding force in the music of **Auntie Christ**, the **Original Sinners** and the **Knitters**. She is also a prolific spoken word and visual artist, her most recent exhibition "Celestial Ash: Assemblages from Los Angeles" at the Craft and Folk Museum in Los Angeles ran through September 13th, 2009.

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