

# Lisa Sokolov Reviews

## What the Press is saying about "*A Quiet Thing*"

"Lisa Sokolov ... (is) making seriously great music for the 21st century. Dynamic... singular ...Sokolov isn't satisfied with finding the heart of a song - she keeps digging until she's found viscera and marrow. ..so brave and sure... intense ...She ... goes deep inside ... this brilliant, challenging set should be considered as one of the best releases of this year."

**J. Hunter - AllAboutJazz**

"Listening to Sokolov sing is like spending an entire day at the ocean. Close your eyes and at one moment her voice lulls you to blissful sleep, while the next a torrent sweeps and crashes you further along the rocky coastline. Then she so subtly comes up for air, and so masterfully - not just turns a phrase - but luxuriates in it, curls up next to it, with such immediacy that you get deliriously lost in the salt-tinged waves."

**PopMatters.com**

"A Quiet Thing' Yes, the album takes its name from its closing track, a rose petal-soft ballad, but is the title also intended teasingly? It 's difficult to equate vocalist and pianist Lisa Sokolov with 'quiet', stealthy, restive, forceful and fearless, yes but rarely quiet... Her skill at phrasing with much the same unfettered gritty gutsiness as Billie Holiday and her ability to shape a stylistic pastiche that contains elements of Blossom Deary's verve, Nancy Wilson's silkiness and Sheila Jordan's ingenuity, Sokolov adds up to a startling fresh original who is the antithesis of tranquility. "

**JazzTimes**

"Master vocalist...Lisa Sokolov knows how to make songs her own..."A Quiet Thing" is a magnificent journey into the soul of songs...charging them with emotional intensity and immediate intimacy, while surpassing familiar interpretations or stylistic conventions. Beautiful...hopeful...vital music"

**All About Jazz**

"One of the most remarkable vocalists on the jazz scene...Lisa mines the depth of human experience without fear--and in doing so is a very welcome presence. On her new recording A Quiet Thing Lisa follows up her 2004 release Presence (which received 5 Stars in Downbeat Magazine) with another disc which explores standards in ways never before conceived or attempted--with astonishing results."

**KIOS Jazz Journal NPR**

"Lisa Sokolov, [\*A Quiet Thing\*](#) (Laughing Horse). Intriguing in her eccentricity, Sokolov takes flying leaps at time, diction, intonation and interpretation. She usually lands right side up. She's a vocal actress and a chance-taker well matched with adventurous musicians including bassist Cameron Brown, pianist John DiMartino and drummer Gerry Hemingway."

**Doug Ramsey Arts Journal**

"Sokolov's last recording is one of only five that I've given the maximum five stars to in *DownBeat* magazine during the past 10 years, so this followup is one I've been looking forward to. Sokolov is a highly distinctive, emotive vocalist ...Her take on "Lush Life," for example, put me in mind of Jimi Hendrix's "Roomful Of Mirrors," ...each phrase seems to betray a different aspect of the subject's despair. ...closer to performance art than mere delivery of a lyric. Like Nora York and – to a somewhat lesser extent, Kurt Elling – Sokolov inhabits a song, ...powerful stuff, and certainly no less affecting than her previous disc. "

**James Hale Jazz Chronicle**

"Lisa Sokolov is a vocalist I really dig... When singing standards she presents the listener with something that has never been heard before. Her aim is to strip these well-known gems down to their vital essence. Often, as on Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life", she mines gold, revitalizing a song that in lesser hands would have been a luke warm rehashing of a brilliant song...If you are looking for a jazz vocalist willing to put her art on the line, then look no further than *A Quiet Thing*."

**Lester French Stream of Consciousness**

"Sokolov is an audacious, astonishing interpreter: she tears "O! Man River" apart line by line to magnify its emotional impact -- her "fear of dying" has never been more palpable; nor has "Lush Life" ever come across as fully felt, the comfort but also the ennui."

**A- Tom Hull Jazz Prospecting**

**What the critics are saying about "*Presence*"**

***DownBeat* gives "*Presence*" 5 stars and Best CD of 2004  
*DownBeat* 2005 Critics Poll places Sokolov on "*Rising Star*" list**

"As far removed stylistically from the reigning royalty of female jazz vocalists as John Coltrane is from Grover Washington, ...exceptionally expressive, dramatic, ecstatic ... masterful ...stunning, life-affirming ...This is jazz vocalizing filled with passion and commitment." *Presence* receives five stars \*\*\*\*\* " masterpiece" Best of the Year  
**DownBeat Magazine**

"Imagine a singer who can move (sometimes within a single phrase) from the sweetness of Norah Jones to the rasp of Janis Joplin and who can do so while maintaining a strong sense of swing and a probing improvisational focus. Even that, however, doesn't quite describe the offbeat Sokolov. Listening to her wide-open performance of a program that includes everything from "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning" to "Chain of Fools" makes it precisely clear why she has been, for the past two decades, a vital participant in Manhattan's avant-garde jazz scene. But that's not to say that "Presence" is a difficult listen. To the contrary, it is filled with fascinating moments, with the sheer out-of-the-box energies of an artist who is shifting and shaping her music in search of ever-new perspectives."

**LA TIMES**

"The most impressive single song I've heard this year, or damn near any other year, is Lisa Sokolov's brighter-than-a-thousand-suns detonation of "Oh What a Beautiful Morning." ...define a dimension in vocal performance that hardly anyone ever dares to enter: dramatic, visceral, blood chilling. "

## **Tom Hull Pazz and Jop Village Voice Best of 2004**

“Even before I write these words, Lisa Sokolov has already hit a grand slam with her new recording *Presence*—five stars in *Down Beat* and many kudos from All About Jazz. . . ., *Presence* is a molten tour de force of genre-crushing music. . . .This is music moving at the velocity of a bullet, creativity and invention years ahead of its time. Ms. Sokolov is changing the face of jazz vocals in the same way Cassandra Wilson did in the last decade, and this change should prove to have greater gravity. “

**All About Jazz**

“Lisa Sokolov is a wildwoman of jazz. Nothing is predictable when she sings. And Sokolov can be compared to no one else. For Sokolov, a true original whose singing involves the consideration of previously unconsidered possibilities, as well as their means of expression, must be accepted on her own terms. There are rewards to spending time with Sokolov’s music. Indeed, Sokolov’s talent possesses such force, even when she holds back...An extraordinary singer...

Lisa Sokolov has recorded a CD that, offers a thematic continuity and that leaves the listener wondering why she hasn’t recorded more often--and when Sokolov will record again.”

**jazzreview.com**

“Sokolov’s version of “Oh what a beautiful morning” is the most compelling re-invention since Ray Charles’ rendition.”

**Town and Village, NYC**

“Hide your children. Get down on the floor in the basement of your elementary school for an air raid drill. Wait a minute, this is a serious evocative free form scat. More advanced than many demographically NPR challenged NPR news altered, frame of mind. So advanced, you need not be scared. Get ready to what’s happening now with scat and LISA SOKOLOV. Take a break from the Mall and walk in the quiet cool air of echo park. And listen to PRESENCE”

**The Voice 88.7fm Sacramento**

## **Winner Best Female Vocal Release 2004 “Twirlie”**

“emotionally powerful encounters...a singing experience that sucks you in like a cyclone and then hurtles and lifts you higher and higher... compelling... . Being in the *Presence* of Lisa Sokolov will alter your conception of the female jazz vocalist.”

**All about Jazz New York**

“If this isn’t range, I don’t know what is. Sokolov’s voice is huge, able to range in expression from playfully coquettish to snarling blues in the course of a single phrase. She synthesizes mainstream vocal traditions—clearly influenced as much by Nina Simone as Sarah Vaughn—with avant-garde approaches to song, miles away from cookie-cutter versions of standards This is an album brimming with personality and warmth.”

**CADENCE**

"it's really hard to describe a voice that can do almost anything. "Presence" is a musical experience, an emotional liberation and soul therapy process. stirring."

**IPIROTIKOS AGON Best CD of 2004**

"...a vast pallet of expressive inflections over such a dizzying range of repertoire ... visceral ...caressing lyrical purity... blows through your soul... Sokolov's virtuosity is always at the service of the music, and there's an emotional charge to her improvisations that readily distinguishes her from the self-conscious retro of better-known divas."

**PLAYBILL**

"Ecstasy, supple invention and abrasion have equal measure when Lisa Sokolov takes on songbook standards, as do her classical training and years on the free jazz scene, With her new CD Presence (Laughing Horse Records), Sokolov's taking her wildly ranging vocal skills public with fresh force.

From originals like "Hard Being Human" and the title track, to Cole Porter and pop classics "When I Die" and "Chain of Fools" (which careens from jagged soul to steely cool and back) Sokolov bends and keens with her instrument, imbuing both with a depth of feeling and the giddy threat of conventions about the erupt.

She and her telepathic band (John DI Martino, Cameron Brown, Gerry Hemingway) come up with music as startling as it is exhilarating, as plangent and radical as it is anchored in traditions."

**John Lockwood NEW YORK PRESS**

"One of the most innovative singers presently working in jazz. Gifted with extraordinary range and control she does things with her voice that I have never heard before... stunning...she sculpts her sounds from the air. As for the emotional impact of her voice, I have seldom been so moved by a singer.. A visionary improviser and a strikingly original innovator who applies her flexible voice and extraordinary range to song with a unique passion. Sokolov is in the first rank of a growing band of musicians who can truly be said to be pushing the envelope of the jazz idiom into the postmodern era. "

**W Royal Stokes "Growing up with Jazz" Oxford University**

**What the critics are saying about "Lazy Afternoon"**

"Sokolov sounds like no one else...Her rendition of "Over the Rainbow" Is intensely beautiful and... should kick her to the ranks of Cassandra Wilson and the other divas. Lazy Afternoon is already one of the years best releases...The hands down winner in the warbling department Much more please Ms. Sokolov. "

**Jazz Now**

"Lisa Sokolov stretches the envelope of jazz singing. She is courageously adventurous. Three stars." (Highest rating)

**LA Times**

"*Lazy Afternoon* is a triumph of her voice and her musical vision. It is as compelling as a stunning diva's most intimate turn; it draws you in, holds you fast, never pushes you

away, and finally lets you down gently and fulfilled.”

**Howard Mandel**

“Lisa Sokolov’s mysterious, yet seductive voice beckons, even after the climax of the tenth track. Sokolov delivers a poignant, breathtaking vocal on, “Over the Rainbow”, which requires a moment of reflective contemplation to absorb its beauty. Encompassing the entire album, Sokolov repeatedly bears her soul through her vocals, and what a beautifully deep, original soul she has.”

**Victory Review**

“*Lazy Afternoon* is an amazing and peerless vocal record...Stunning. It is an important contribution to the mainstream body of vocal style developed by Sarah Vaughn and Ella Fitzgerald. The combination of bare honest sentiment and vastly versatile lyric inducts Sokolov into the pantheon of jazz divas. *Lazy Afternoon* is an exquisite album of the level of technical excellence that comes along all too rarely.”

**Daily Tribune Michigan**

“Sokolov is a unique vocalist who has developed an arresting persona as a jazz singer. She has ‘can’t miss’ written all over her.

**Cadence Magazine**

“Those who are weary of dime-a-dozen Sarah Vaughan clones and Ella Fitzgerald wannabees should search for this chance-taking effort.”

**Alex Henderson WhereHouse Music**

“I haven’t listened to jazz vocals like this in quite a while and I listen to a LOT of music. Freedom of spirit abounds and will pick you up from whatever pit you’re in! Cool beyond belief! If you don’t purchase ANY other music this year and if your forte is jazz, GET this one. It’s gonna be around for a LONG time to come! MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!”

**Improvjazzation Nation**

“A personality all her own, Lisa Sokolov’s *Lazy Afternoon* is intelligent, intent, relaxed and funky throughout. She keeps the listener right with her and makes every line a new experience. A ride well worth taking.”

**Crossroads Weekly, Albuquerque, NM**

Jazz Harvest; The Choicest fruits of 1999; Musical adventurer, Lisa Sokolov’s *Lazy Afternoon* is unforgettable...a tour de force...a thing of beauty.

**Westchester County Weekly**

“*Lazy Afternoon* is delirious... delicate... florid and fantastic!”

**Village Voice**

**What the critics are saying about "*angel Rodeo*"**

**Editors Choice Best CD of The Year 1993  
Cadence Magazine**

“master singer/improviser Lisa Sokolov again was brilliant at Vision Festival 2003, causing me to again pull out her disc *angel Rodeo*, and again got goosebumps from her sound and her ideas. You should get it anyway you can. It’s different from and as near

perfect a disc as Jeanne Lee's Nuba or Cassandra Wilson's Blue Skies."

**Steve Koenig Jumps Arts Journal**

"Here's an artist that makes genres disappear. Sokolov hammers together a unique box of sounds on an instrument she has developed to great effect...her voice breathes fire."

**CMJ**

"Most adventurous. Sokolov brings the full force of mature musical intelligence to bear on these songs. Never less than excellent."

**Cadence**

"Her voice spirals through the lyrics, effecting a confluence of Meredith Monk and Betty Carter. The gypsy strains and constant caprice give her glide plenty of slide."

**Musician**

"Lisa Sokolov displays incredible vocal range, versatility and creativity on her wild interpretations. This album is like a ticket to an avant-garde vocal extravaganza. It will make you sit up and listen until curtain-fall."

**Victory Review**

"A strong voice and daring intelligence. Holy ferocious..."

**Howard Mandel**

"Hilarious and entrancing"

**Riverfront Times**

"Sokolov makes you feel anything in life is possible"

**Boston Phoenix**

### ***What the critics say about performance***

"14th Vision Festival ...Saturday evening turned out to be the most consistently thrilling...the biggest surprise of the festival, (was) Lisa Sokolov...spectacular...rich ...inventive ...distinctive ...intoxicating. ...Sokolov's charismatic performance was spellbinding."

**Jazz Inside Magazine**

"Sokolov's performance at Sweet Rhythm last month was dazzlingly instructional, demonstrating the power in her voice and her appealing mix of spontaneity and total control. ... powerful... ...funky and ever-evolving... breathtaking"

**Donald Elfman - All About Jazz**

"A visionary improviser and a strikingly original innovator... Sokolov can truly be said to be pushing the envelope of the jazz idiom into the Post Modern Era."

**Royal Stokes OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS**

"Cecil Taylor led his 27 piece orchestra ... pinning you to your seat with hurricane force..... One or two soloists stood out, including singer Lisa Sokolov, whose volatile scating and whooping, made Taylor laugh aloud, stood out ... Inspired."

**Gary Giddens VILLAGE VOICE**

"Lisa Sokolov, one of the most creative jazz vocalists of our time. And when the bands bass Player was Cameron Brown and the drummer Gerry Hemingway, one could not imagine the better way to end the festival."

**Kaleva, Shari Karttunen**

"Lisa Sokolov shows great courage, ability, projection and personal magnetism in her performance...extraordinary vocal control...Lisa develops sound paintings with countless facets. She hovers at the summit of her range and then drops rhythmically into the very depths. She understands vocal dynamics and silence...an exciting experience...a great success!"

**NEUMUENSTER POST**

"She knows how to make use of all imaginable tone possibilities. The magic and the fascination of the unique and personal touch of Sokolov in a dynamically exciting form, with great power of expression."

**NEUE ZUERCHER ZEITUNG**

"The fine and subtle phrasing, the refined timing, reveal this American's traditions. Nevertheless, this embracing of the tradition is not a regression; Lisa Sokolov breaks up old forms. Her pieces are adventurous excursions with surprising passages, strong contrasts, and quick changes of scene which confront diverse material with diverse techniques. Along with her intuition and spontaneity, there is always a strong sense of form and discipline."

**TAGESANZEIGER**

"... the beguiling and potent voice of Lisa Sokolov... impassioned singing; extraordinary technique.."

**NEW YORK TIMES**

" I have always been fascinated by the feisty avant/jazz singer Lisa Sokolov, who I've heard with William Parker's Little Huey Orchestra and was knocked out by her exuberant set at this year's Vision Fest. Lisa's bluesy, dreamy voice gets down on Hemingway's new CD SONGS in a fine, funky, smoky way. It makes me wanna do a slow dance with some fine woman. Lisa sounds ever soulful throughout this slightly twisted but funky delight. She adds a great deal of soul, passion and sly power to these songs. "

**JAZZ GALLERY**

"We watched her as she watched Cecil Taylor in a Manhattan rehearsal hall, then later caught her singing blues in that little club she's so used to: white-haired, with windblown determination, she has popped up here and there along the past byways of the trail of out-of-the-box jazz. Lisa Sokolov throws accepted concepts for a loop. She gives meaning, actually a hidden meaning, to each of her controlled eruptions....Inspiring."

**CULTURAL PAGE< GENEVA**

**Lisa Sokolov Charmed Tampere** (Headline) The Tampere Jazz Happening succeeded musically, above all was the singer Lisa Sokolov, who made clear that the human voice is the most versatile of all instruments, when you are not afraid to use it. absolute mastery, brilliant. better way to end the festival.

**Kaleva, Shari Karttunen**