

## TORI AMOS

### Under the Pink

ATLANTIC 85397-2 • 1994, 56:52

Performance ★ ★ ★

Sound Quality ★ ★ ★

Her 1991 debut *Little Earthquakes* had “promising” writ large upon it. A follow-up EP—with a sharp cover of Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit”—only upped the ante. But the second full-length CD from Tori Amos is neither shoddy enough to dismiss her nor strong enough to announce the arrival of a major talent.

Little has changed musically with *Under the Pink*: It’s dominated by piano-based melodies and Amos’ marvelous singing. In a way, this could be her debut. “God,” the first single, tries to be daring in a high school poetry way (“God, sometimes you just don’t come through”) and there’s even an indulgent, overlong final track, complete with strings (“Yes Anastasia”).

While she rarely sounds convincing on louder numbers like “The Waitress” or the histrionic break that mars the lovely opener “Pretty Good Year,” pensive more personal songs such as “Icicle,” “Cloud on My Tongue,” and “Baker Baker” make it clear the

well hasn’t run dry.

Others pluses include the atmospheric “Past the Mission” and “The Wrong Band”; the latter has a lolling melody worthy of Paul McCartney circa *The White Album*. The jury is still out on Amos but—unlike Tracy Chapman—her trial hasn’t grown tiresome yet.

—Michael Giltz



## LINDA RONSTADT

### Winter Light

ELEKTRA 61545-2 • 1993, 37:14

Performance ★ ★ ★

Sound Quality ★ ★ ★ ★

Linda Ronstadt is going to have a wildly eclectic boxed set some day. Already it will have to encompass mariachi music, Gilbert & Sullivan, Tin Pan Alley, and country—not to mention the occasional rock’n’roll number.

Surely a few tracks will be pulled from *Winter Light*, the follow-up to her Grammy-winning smash *Cry Like a Rainstorm, Howl Like the Wind*. Tackling producing chores, Ronstadt maintains a glossy surface but avoids the bombast that marred her last pop effort.

The result certainly *feels* more personal. The Bacharach/David gem “Anyone Who Had a Heart” is achingly direct, the Beach Boys classic “Don’t Talk (Put Your Head on My Shoulder)” is almost unnaturally romantic, and the first single, “Heartbeats Accelerating,” is given an urgent, plaintive reading that deserves to be a hit.

While the rest is sometimes too restrained for its own good, her only serious stumble is on the title track, an unconvincingly ethereal tune written for the movie *The Secret Garden*—one less song to choose from when filling up that box.

—Michael Giltz