

happen - it's like waiting for Mr. Right.

### Discography



DANCING WITH VACUUMS is the debut disc from the Barbies - in many ways, it's the best introduction to the band; a strong display of the band's consistent strengths, tight musicianship, a talented vocalist, and good songwriting. Patty Spiglanan has been described as being somewhere between Joni Mitchell and Linda Ronstadt in terms of performance and songwriting and that's a pretty apt description of the Barbie's sound (usually labeled as "Americana"). To be really blunt about it, what "Americana" boils down to is good music - elements of blues, soul, country and rock, without all the gimmicks. The backbone of this is the songwriting, and the major

ity of songs on DANCES are written by Spiglanan and Michael Conner - the aforementioned 'Midnight Radio', 'Shut Up', 'Take Your Time With Me'. 'For Sale Sign'. Other strong tracks are from outside writers, such as Sarah Decker (who was Spiglanan's bandmate in an earlier band) with 'Inneundo', George Pederson with 'Changes In The Weather and Jon Garside co-writing with Spiglanan & Lashkoff on 'Home'. There's also a spirited cover of Lerner & Lowe's 'on The street where You Live'. That basic aesthetic remains in effect for the Barbies' second and third albums - on TARNISHED (NBD Records, 1996) "Love By The Hour", "My Little Drama", "Sam" are the best tracks by Spiglanan Spiglanan/Connor; a couple of covers (Dylan's "She Belongs To Me" and Little Willie John's "Leave My Kitten Alone" -the standout track is "Junkie", another song from Sarah Decker. LIVING INDEPEN-

DENTLY (NBD Records, 1998) features more songwriting collaborations among the band ("Turlock" "Darling", "I Got Killed [Adventures In Dating]" and only one cover (Joni Mitchell's "River") and a hidden track (an instrumental, "Pajama Party"). The Barbies were poised for success; however, they weren't well known outside the Bay Area. That began to change with their break-out appearance at SXSW in 1999. sometime after that, the band was signed by SF-based label Monarch Records, and the recording of the album, WHEN I WAS YOU, released in May 2000. One major change their name. Probably due to possible legalities with Mattel, the band ditched the "Barbies" moniker and



were rechristened The Vagabond Lovers, WHEN I WAS YOC is almost a sampler of the band's work over the past few years, now restructured under their new incarnation - probably an unfair comparison to make, but unavoidable when five of the songs on the album ("Junkie", "Midnight Radio", "For Sale Sign", "Living Independently" and "I Got Killed") are on previous Barbies albums. Their sound has been restructured by producer Dave McNair, and the results are decidedly mixed - "Junkie" has been re-arranged to be more poppish sounding and the guitar parts are less ostentatious than in the "Barbies" version. It's not bad - "Junkie" was chosen as the single and was featured on an episode of NBC's "Providence" prior to the album's debut - but it's tepid when compared to the version on TARNISHED. The same cannot be said of "Midnight Radio", which is a great song but the recording on WHEN I WAS YOU

is not the greatest (my opinion). That said, some of the newer versions - "Living Independently" and "I Got Killed" - hold up well in comparison to their predecessors. New songs are "Kitchen". "You Make It Easy". "Wonderful Thing", "A Thousand Different Reasons": and two covers Chock Prophet's "Him" and The cars' "Drive". Overall, it's a good album, and one that will probably gain more notice than the previous albums, due to now having label support. And my big criticisms will only make sense to those who are familiar with the Naked Barbies; someone encountering the Vagabond Lovers for the first time will have no idea of the Naked Barbies discs and will think the songs are fine (after all, they are strong songs to begin with). For more info, go to the Monarch Records site, [www.monarchrecords.com](http://www.monarchrecords.com) for sound samples from the album or write them directly at the following: Monarch Records

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San Francisco. CA 94107  
(415) 278-0620  
[webmaster@monarchrecords.com](mailto:webmaster@monarchrecords.com)  
The band now has a site up under the new name, [www.vagabondlovers.com](http://www.vagabondlovers.com) so that's a good source for current information, and also where you can obtain the previous Naked Barbie albums. You might also want to see the previous site, [www.smalltown.com/barbies](http://www.smalltown.com/barbies) which was still up as of this writing. Michael Comer is also a well-respected science fiction writer-his notable work to date is the novel ARCHANGEL, an alternate history tale that's been well acclaimed. Published by Tor Books, it's worth searching for, as well as his other work.

Patty Spiglanan, 1998

