

Home of the Brave

Review by Lois Wadsworth

A film by Laurie Anderson—18 concert pieces from her 1984 tour shot on a special stage in the Park Theater in Union City, New Jersey, in July of 1985, recorded and mixed digitally.

If you missed Laurie Anderson's excellent performance at the Hult Center in June of 1984, here's your chance to catch her electronic wizardry on the screen. She's an uncommon musician from a classical background who uses technology to invent new sounds and create a new musical style. An artist as well as a musician and comic performer, she designed all the visuals—and they are wonderful—for *Home of the Brave*. She wrote and directed the picture, her first. Her years on stages all over the world as a leading performance artist really pay off in the film—she understands movement, space and timing as instinctively as the Talking Heads' David Byrne.

While Anderson influences virtually every aspect of *Home of the*

Brave, her many collaborators are fine musicians in their own right. Adrian Belew ("who'll play anything that plugs in") works out on a number of wicked guitars, including a very strange rubber-neck guitar he tries to whip into shape with a mallet. Joy Askew, who appeared in the Hult show, is the talented keyboardist whose understated presence provides a perfect counterpoint to Anderson's androgynous electricity. Richard Landry's saxophone wails, and David Van Tieghem's percussive gymnastics are nothing short of amazing. Dolette McDonald and Janice Pendarvis carry the backups with class, as they did here in '84 and in Michael Apted's Sting film, *Bring on the Night*. William Burroughs, old Sharkey himself, is in the picture as well, dancing with Anderson in a couple of cute numbers.

Anderson says her work is about "illusion and disorientation" and that she is a "narrator, or

maybe a ventriloquist." None of the pieces reflect the artist's Zen-like sensibilities more completely than *Kokoku* which opens with Korean-born Sang Wan Park reciting and playing a 12-silk-stringed zither in front of brilliant, shape-shifting graphics—Fish, Horse, Bird. The background becomes a mountain peak, and luminous snow falls on the now expanded cast as the haunting music builds. Eventually, a large clock behind the singers comes to dominate the scene. **TIME IS STOPPED. HOME OF THE BRAVE.**

The film provokes a paradoxical, simultaneous awareness of simplicity and complexity—a glimpse into a unique artist's approach to transforming technology into art. I have to agree with the *L.A. Weekly*:

"If intelligence is the ultimate aphrodisiac, then Laurie Anderson is one of the sexiest women on earth."



Laurie Anderson in her new film "Home of the Brave."

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