

KINA

Self-titled

(DreamWorks Records)

In this era of singers who use vocal gymnastics to disguise their vapid songs, Kina is an unexpected blast of fresh air.

The Detroit native sings songs of authentic emotional power, with clever lyrics and compelling beats, in a voice that is part Tina Turner and part Alanis Morissette. She doesn't need the tiresome vocal stylings upon which Mariah Carey has wasted her considerable promise.

Kina Coper, briefly a member of the R&B group Brownstone, has bucked the current hip-hop conventions and adopted a traditional pop flavor. She is more Joni Mitchell and Janis Ian than Christina Aguilera, and the result is extremely satisfying. She intelligently explores the world of love and loss and of relationships maturing and surviving the ravages of time. In the affecting "Have a Cry," she contemplates the meaning and value of sorrow.

The record company clearly hopes that the lead song, the terrific kiss-off "Girl From the Gutter," is the big hit from the album. But make no mistake: Any one of the tracks is a potential hit.

— Sean Scully

"Now Hear This" July 29, 2000