

SUZANNE VEGA

Widely regarded as one of the foremost songwriters of her generation, **Suzanne Vega** emerged as a leading figure of the early 1980s folk revival when, accompanying herself on acoustic guitar, she sang what has been called contemporary folk or neo-folk songs of her own creation in Greenwich Village clubs. Since the release of her self-titled, critically acclaimed 1985 debut album, she has been known for performances that convey deep emotion, with NPR Music noting that she “has been making vital, inventive music” throughout the course of her decades-long career.

Bearing the stamp of a masterful storyteller who “observes the world with a clinically poetic eye” (*The New York Times*), Vega’s songs have tended to focus on city life, ordinary people and real-world subjects. Notably succinct and understated, her work is immediately recognizable—as utterly distinct and thoughtful as it was when her voice was first heard on the radio over 30 years ago.

Vega’s most recent album, *An Evening of New York Songs and Stories*, was released in 2020. A live recording, it incorporates familiar songs like “Luka” and “Tom’s Diner”, deep cuts from her catalog and a cover of “Walk On The Wild Side” by her late friend, Lou Reed. The mix of repertoire also features “New York Is My Destination” from *Lover, Beloved: Songs from an Evening with Carson McCullers*, Vega’s 2016 album from her one-woman play about the Southern gothic novelist Carson McCullers. A filmed version of Vega’s play had its world premiere at the SXSW festival in March 2022 and features songs by Vega with music by Duncan Sheik.

Vega’s debut album was co-produced by Steve Addabbo and Lenny Kaye and achieved platinum status. “Marlene on the Wall” was a surprise hit in the U.K. and *Rolling Stone* included the record in their “100 Greatest Recordings of the 1980s.”

1987’s follow-up, *Solitude Standing* elevated Vega to star status. The album was nominated for three Grammys (including Record of the Year), sold three million copies worldwide and included the hit “Luka”. The album’s opening song was an a cappella piece, “Tom’s Diner,” about a nondescript restaurant near Columbia University. Without Vega’s permission, it was remixed by U.K. electronic duo DNA and bootlegged as “Oh Susanne.” Suddenly Vega’s voice was showing up in the most unlikely setting of all: the club. She permitted an official release of the remix of “Tom’s Diner” under its original title, which reached #5 on the *Billboard* pop chart.

Continuing to battle preconceptions, she teamed with producer Mitchell Froom for 1992’s *99.9F*, the sound of which inspired descriptions like “industrial folk” and “techno folk.” Certified gold, *99.9F* won a New York Music Award as Best Rock Album. In 1996, Vega returned with the similarly audacious *Nine Objects of Desire*, also produced by Froom. In 2007, Vega released the Grammy award-winning *Beauty & Crime*, a deeply personal reflection of her native New York City in the wake of the loss of her brother Tim Vega and the tragedy of 9/11. Vega’s love for the city shines through as both its subject and its setting, and she mixes the past and present, the public with the private, and familiar sounds with the utterly new—just like the city itself.