

MAGNET

Real Music Alternatives

ESSENTIAL NEW MUSIC: ZZ WARD'S "THE STORM"



ZZ Ward's gritty alto is perfect for singing the blues. Her songs are rooted in the sounds of the delta, the Chicago of the '50s and the rhythms of hip hop. She grew up playing slide guitar, but the sounds of her brother's rap LPs seeped into her soul, giving her music a modern, urban spin, full of the thunder and lightning the album title implies. The production is layered with wicked percussion, dark synthesizer textures and skittering acoustic guitars that support Ward's mournful, bluesy wail. "Bag Of Bones" uses the thumping rhythms of a chain gang to describe the end of an unhealthy relationship, while the gospel-tinged backing vocals and syncopated percussion of "Hold On" and "Help Me Momma" lend Ward's vocals a sanctified feeling. After 10 tracks of primal wailing, she cuts loose on "Ride," an uptempo tune she wrote for *Cars 3* that's full of exuberant energy.

—j. poet