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Contradictions

Side FX | Self Produced (2008)

By [Robert M. Sutton](#)

For all of its Contradictions, Side FX is remarkably consistent. This Washington, D.C.-based outfit has a firm grip on toe-tapping melodies and radio-sweetened hooks. Led by singer Kim Cameron, Side FX is both a throwback *and* a vehicle of the future. On one hand, Side FX can be compared to The Pretenders and Fleetwood Mac—accessible pop/rock acts with female lead singers who didn't yell, conveying their emotional turmoil through soulful harmonies and straightforward, engaging arrangements. On the other hand, Side FX are fully plugged into the iPod philosophy of anything goes, deconstructing the established definition of alternative music by incorporating reggae, jazz, blues, and country into its menu.



However, Side FX's mix-and-match of genres is never forced, and that has much to do with the easygoing chemistry between Cameron and her partner, guitarist Chris Nikpora. The opening "Scattered" is haunted by the late-summer sadness of The Motels in their "Take the L" peak. Cameron's blue-Monday crooning is given added layers of melancholy by Jon Nazdin's gloomy post-punk bass lines and Benji Porecki's velvet-smooth synthesizers. But just as Side FX reels in listeners with this mood-drenched style, they quickly drop it. "My Hero" dips into '70s funk while riding a reggae beat, with Cameron—so soft-spoken on "Scattered"—deepening her voice and taking on new emotional depth. By "Come a Little Closer," it becomes obvious that Side FX isn't playing by any rule books. Backed by Brian Simms' teary-eyed piano, Cameron reaches a heightened level of passion and unguarded sensitivity, and Nikpora's searing rock riffs provide a breathtaking cathartic release. It sounds like nothing which came before and, quite frankly, nothing after it as well.

On "Her Escape," Side FX delves further into the smooth-jazz waters hinted on "Come a Little Closer," and then gives it a bluesy wallop. Davey Yarbourough's fiery sax ignites the track—hotter than gasoline poured on a campfire. However, Side FX refuses to stand pat, or give in to any formula. In "Life's Mystery," Side FX branches into Americana, Cameron adopting the broken spirit and heartfelt yearning of Patsy Cline as her band mates kick into country mode, all twangy with dramatic violins. Yes, this is the same group. But Side FX cannot be accused of having an identity crisis. They're quite aware of who they are, each and every one of them.

Visit [Side FX](#) on the web.

Track listing: Scattered; My Hero; Come a Little Closer; Her Escape; I Want to Hear; Won't Break Down; Life's Mystery; The Way You Look at Me; Never Forget.

Personnel: Kim Cameron: vocals; Chris Nikpora: guitar; Marco Delmar: guitars; Andy Hamburger: drums; Cathy Lowell: backup vocals; Robbie Magruder: drums; John McIlwaine: drums; Joe Michaels: violin; Jon Nazdin: bass; Scotti O'Toole: guitar; d: keyboards; Brian Simms: piano, keyboards; Jean Francis Varre: backup vocals; Davey Yarbourough: flute, sax.