

Rolling Stone



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A NATIONAL HEALTH CARE

The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black

Beautiful Label

MUSICAL NOVELTY ACTS are a dime a dozen, but few cult bands put out discs that manage to duplicate the spirit of their live shows. A welcome exception: the first full-length CD by the glam-punk outfit the Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black, New York City's wildest club ticket. But how to capture the Voluptuous Horror live? (At a typical gig, as many as 10 formidable specimens will cavort onstage, many of them half-naked or in outrageous drag, many in full body paint.) Leave it to frontwoman Kembra Pfahler (a cross between Ann-Margret and Elvira), guitarist Samoa (a virtuoso) and a fierce rhythm section to do just that. Add guest appearances by the Psychedelic Furs' Joe McGinty, among others, and what you get is 12 tunes about rising above the banal horrors of everyday reality. This is perfect music for people whose lives feel like a movie — a campy B movie. And there are no "best" cuts, just personal favorites, such as "Alaska" (an indictment of grimy urban existence), "One Man Lady" (a

punk "Stand By Your Man") and "You Slay Me," a love song with Cole Porter wit and Addams Family tenderness: "North, south, east and west/You're a bouquet of flowers at my bed in death."

A *National Health Care* is available from Beautiful Label, P.O. Box 20818, New York, NY 10009

— JULIA SZABO

