

Time Out New York

October 14–21, 2004

Suzzy and Maggie Roche

Why the Long Face
(Redhouse)

One would think that artists such as the Roches, folk-pop musicians who have been splicing and dicing the various compositions of human emotions since 1979, would frequently slip into maudlin fare or even lyrical corniness. Yet these sisters have generally steered clear of such pitfalls by probing deeper into their subjects than most songwriters. On *Why the Long Face*, Suzzy and Maggie Roche (sans sister Terre) ply their skills in lyrical odysseys about September 11, partisan politics and relationship jousting. The duo adds new shadings to those weathered themes with acrobatic harmonies, a touch of levity and rawboned, largely acoustic instrumentation.

"One Season," a tragicomic tale of a doomed romance, encapsulates their ingenuity as songwriters. "I've got to get away from you," Suzzy and Maggie sing, their harmonies—initially enchanting—now curdling into dissonance under the grave message. In the piano-based "Who Cares," Suzzy sums up the sameness of all rabid political ideology: "I think that I'm a dove but maybe I'm a hawk / Someday I will fly away."

The set's best track, "The Lonely Road to Nowhere"—musically reminiscent of Carole King—reflects on the dichotomy within otherwise

strong women who feel fragile without men. An uneasy subject for a pair of urbane, accomplished vets, but as *Why the Long Face* reveals, Suzzy and Maggie thrive when focusing on the finer gradations of human frailties.

—Karen Iris Tucker

Suzzy and Maggie Roche play Joe's Pub Wed 20.

