

First Night

Released 1976

[By William Ruhlman, All Music Guide](#)

On her debut album, New York cabaret singer Jane Olivor suggested a bridge between the traditional pop singers who had been marginalized by rock & roll and the folk-rock singer/songwriters of the late '60s and early '70s.

Often seeming to be wilfully holding back

tears with her throbbing voice and precise intonation, she turned "My First Night Alone Without You," rendered with wry, bluesy understatement only a year earlier by Bonnie Raitt on her Home Plate album, into a full-blown torch anthem.

When she essayed more familiar material, such as the Fleetwoods' "Come Softly to Me," Don McLean's "Vincent," and "Some Enchanted Evening" from the Broadway musical South Pacific, she and arranger Lee Holdridge boldly rewrote the melodies to give the songs a smoother linear flow, making them more appropriate to her emotive approach. ("Some Enchanted Evening" composer Richard Rodgers, for one, reportedly was not pleased with the result, though the track gave Olivor her first chart entry.)

She was best suited to light pop, such as "Morning, Noon and Nighttime" and "Better Days (Looks as Though We're Doing Somethin' Right)," the latter co-written by her fellow cabaret veteran Melissa Manchester with Carole Bayer Sager.

Along with Manchester, Barry Manilow, Peter Allen, and others, Olivor seemed at the start of her career to be creating a new form of light pop music that plumbed the complex emotional depths first investigated by confessional singer/songwriters, yet employed a sophistication associated with an earlier generation of singers.

It may have turned out to be a musical style that thrived only in the hothouse atmosphere of city boîtes, but for a while this looked like the birth of a new form of American art songs, and Jane Olivor was one of its leading advocates on her first record.

