

WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA

THE MAGAZINE

REGINA CARTER



Alex Clarke
Aline Homzy
Amy Gadiaga
Anita Wardell
Ashaine White
Betty Accorsi
Betty Carter
Carla Bley
Diana Torti
Enid Farber
Esther Bennett
Hannah Horton
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Tatiana Gorilovsky
Germana Stella La Sorsa
Migdalia Van Der Hoven
Monika S Jakubowska
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DEC 2023

and so much more

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We are always grateful to our many partners that support our work and would like to give special thanks to our guest contributors for this edition:

Enid Farber, Nick Lea, Kind of Jazz, Nolan Regent, Ron Milsom and special shout out to Dr Bradley Stone who is fast becoming honorary member of the team!

PHOTO OF CHINA MOSES BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

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Claudia Villela

Claire Daly

Welcome to our seventh Women in Jazz Media magazine, and my first magazine stepping in as Deputy Editor!

As for my editor's message for this edition, I would like to thank Women in Jazz Media and Fiona Ross in particular, for mentoring me and guiding me through the world of editorial media and jazz journalism. Since graduating in the summer of 2022, I have been involved in two London Jazz Festivals, flown to Berlin for XJAZZ! Been backstage at the Cheltenham Jazz Festival, met some of my all time favourite musicians including KOKOROKO and Muva of Earth, been to countless gigs all over London and developed my own unique writing style. What a year it has been...

I am so grateful for this opportunity to learn and take in this musical world, advocating for the rights of women and non-binary individuals as I go. My journalism mission is simple: To make the music industry a healthier place for all, and I cannot imagine embarking on this mission without the help of Women in Jazz Media.

So thank you. And thank you to everyone who contributed to this quarterly edition of the magazine, we wouldn't be anywhere without the words and wisdom of all those involved.

We hope you enjoy this edition and go on to support all of these wonderful women. After all, it is always about them.

ISABEL MARQUEZ, DEPUTY EDITOR

REGINA CARTER



PHOTO BY CHRIS DRUKKER



PHOTO BY CHRIS DRUKKER

REGINA CARTER

VOICING THE TRUTH

Regina Carter is a legend. Violinist, composer, educator, three time Grammy nominee, Recipient of the MacArthur “genius” award, a Doris Duke Artist Award, winner of multiple readers’ and critics’ poll awards, Pulitzer Prize jurist...the list goes on. Regina’s work is exciting, ground-breaking and extensive and she has – and continues – to inspire people throughout the globe.

Talking to Regina was, as I expected, inspiring. She is such a generous and giving artist, who seeks to support others whilst always firmly holding her ground and remaining clear on her messaging and where her heart is – in her music and the community. With her first album released in 1995, there was much to explore and in the first of this two part interview, we began in Italy.

In 2001, an Italian newspaper featured the headline ‘Queen of Scandal’ referring to Regina’s upcoming performance where she was to play Paganini’s legendary Guarneri violin. Not only was she the first jazz musician do so, but she was the first African American jazz musician to do so, and a woman too. Surrounded by armed gunmen, Regina, of course, was magnificent.

I can still bring that up! It’s stored in my body... You know it’s so hard to put into words what all of that meant. A friend of mine, who lives in Genoa, came up with the idea and I just never thought it would happen but when the whole process started and

I saw that it could become a reality, I was pretty blown away. There were a lot of push backs and I realised it was really important for this to happen. I understood that most people play that violin because they have won the competition but it wasn’t me that was going to them and saying I want to play this violin without entering the competition, it was someone from the community and because it was going to be a jazz concert - there’s no jazz competition to play - so just the idea of it, the pushback, at the time, kind of took me aback. But once I got there and having a violin keeper in the room with me in the corner the whole time, the way they brought the violin in, and knowing there were two armed police officers outside, I didn’t just feel like, OK I’m just going pick this up and riff...

As musicians we often talk about pressure, getting nervous but I don’t think many jazz musicians have an understanding of performing with armed gunmen around. That is a whole new level of pressure.

After the first day of rehearsals with the violin, Andrea (Andrea Liberovici) and my pianist at the time, were in conversation with this gentleman who was the presenter of the concert and I could tell it was tense. I found out no tickets had been sold and they said I’d have to pay for the hall...So my friend Andrea came



Regina comes from a powerful lineage of strong and unstoppable women and it is unsurprising that she exudes strength, grace and confidence, not just with her music but in everything she does. With eleven albums already released, an incredible portfolio of inspirational work, including being awarded the NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship this year, I asked her how she stayed so calm and sane.

I have friends, women that play this music and have children and I don't see how they do it! It's an interesting question. I mean how do any of us do what we do? We just do it. We do what we have to do.

Most times in my head is a traffic circle...I don't know... I know that sometimes I go on stage and I'm just so nervous. I have a friend that has seen me for years and she'll say you never look nervous when you walk on stage, you look like you have it all together. I think that's my mask. I have to go out like that. I do still get a little bit nervous which is good and my husband says it means I care and I think that's true. Sometimes there are certain situations, and I am petrified and it's really difficult to be in the moment and to calm down. My mom really was a force of nature. A kindergarten teacher, she was born in 1926 in Detroit in an area called Black Bottom where blacks and immigrants were forced to live and in the 50s they built a highway through her neighbourhood and split up the community. She had a lot to deal with. She put herself through college, her mother went to college and graduated in 1915 so there's some very strong women - you're going to get an education whether you want to or not! So, growing up playing violin when I did in the 60s, in Detroit, there were only a handful of black people in my class. I remember my first violin teacher telling my mother that it was going to be really difficult for me to get a job in the Symphony Orchestra because I was black. She was just telling the truth and there was only one black person and it hap-

up with this idea to have a press conference and so all these people showed up and they said that some people think that if you play jazz on this instrument it devalues it, and I said well you can't disconnect the Music from the culture and say that a music is lesser, then you're saying a people are lesser... the next day the headline for their major newspaper was 'Queen of Scandal to play Paganini's Violin'.

Queen of Scandal. Regina is a Queen of many things, scandal is not one of them. However, it does give you an insight into the many barriers she has broken down. The following year, she returned to Italy and recorded her album Paganini: After A Dream on Paganini's violin and as the brilliant journalist Eugene Holley, Jr. said 'She came, she saw, she conquered and, she swung'

What was interesting was that my record label at the time did not want to do this record, they didn't think that it was going to sell. I remember doing sort of an audition for them in New York and I had the band come in and we played tunes and we ordered all this Italian food and desserts and set it all up and they just didn't think it was going to sell. I remember the president said well, if you sell x records, it will give you x amount of money. I was already spending my money, flying my band over, hiring the video crew etc. because I believed in the project so much and not because it was going to necessarily sell loads of records. It was important to me. And it ended up selling far more than they thought it was going to sell. That opened my eyes as far as record labels and how a lot of people, I won't say all, but for a lot for people, it's about money. But money is not the bottom line and as we know, jazz doesn't really sell.

No one goes into Jazz to make money.

If that's why you are here, leave now.

pened to be a man in the orchestra at that time and it was a long time before they let women in... My mother's whole thing was where there's a will there's a way. I'm paraphrasing but she would say that when you come up against a hurdle, it's just a speed bump and if you really want that thing then you'll figure out a way to get there. You might have to take a detour and sometimes you might see that what you think you want or what you thought you want, you don't really want to put the work in to get it, so you didn't really want it and there's nothing wrong with that. I think as we get older we start to see what's really important to us and what we really want, not what other people think we should want.

She was just so matter of fact about things. She'd say 'why not?', 'just ask' her whole thing was 'just ask' and that's powerful. I remind myself and tell my friends, if you don't ask, the answer is automatically no. People

say well why does this person get this, why did that work, and I say, maybe because they just asked!

Regina's albums take us on an incredible journey through exploring her family history, honouring Ella Fitzgerald, a stunning tribute to her Mother, Grace Carter and most recently politics. I asked Regina about the development of her musical path that she had taken through her albums.

For my first two records, it was just music that I liked and it was more from the pop side of things. But then after I toured with Wynton Marsalis and was picked up by a straight ahead jazz label, Verve, they specifically wanted a jazz record, a mainstream straight ahead jazz record. I did that but I still needed my voice to be heard - what I like, what I enjoy and what I grew up listening to. I remember the A&R guy for the first record said 'you have all kinds

tunes on here and people aren't going to know where you're coming from' and I said, but I like all these tunes! I think he thought I was trying to chase different audiences and I said no, this is how I grew up. I've always been clear about what I want. I knew I wasn't going to get rich making jazz records and I had to be true to myself. I felt like listeners and audiences - and I still do - know when you're telling your truth. So, I just said to the label, you'll have to figure out how to sell these records not me! This is me.

I've had major life changes and things happened that really affected me in a huge way and which started to guide me. I've just always been clear on what it is that I want and I fight for what I want and I fight for others. I never think of myself as a role model but I think we all are, because people are watching us and we don't know. Recently it seems, as a woman in this business, I've realised that maybe I would've handled something differently if there wasn't a young woman standing there watching this thing happen, and I knew inside that I've got to handle it in a way so she learns that this is not acceptable.

Some artists can understandably be a little wary of bringing politics into their artistry but there is of course an argument to put forward that it is the perfect place for social commentary, and certainly jazz has always been an important and almost sacred place for exploring often unspoken issues and enabling a safe place for emotion. Regina's last album, in 2020, *Swing States: Harmony In The Battleground* sees her move into a political arena, where political turmoil in America is still, sadly, very relevant now, if not worse.

This record was born out of a conversation with the producer of the record (Grammy Award-winning producer and writer Kabir Sehgal). We had worked on some other recordings together and he asked me if I vote and I was kind of taken aback, because, of course I vote! We were talking about how so



so many people don't vote and how they don't believe that their vote matters and he said what do you think about doing a record that might inspire people to get involved? So the first idea was to do tunes that became popular during the Civil Rights era but Kabir came back and he said what about a record of tunes from all the swing states and with the band, (each of us was from a swing state) I thought it was a brilliant idea. John Daversa, a trumpet player and composer, who I always wanted to work with, arranged these tunes and I just wasn't sure what he was going to do with them and I have to say, probably my favourite arrangement of his was 'Dancing in the Street'. That was a popular tune when I was growing up and it became a Civil Rights anthem in the 60s in Detroit with the riots and everything. No one could expect what he came up with and it was just really incredible, just being with those musicians and hearing their thoughts. We had so many heavy conversations in the studio and we'd start talking and Kabir was like wait, go in the booth and finish having that conversation in the booth, recorded. So, for me it was a way of hopefully inspiring people to really pay attention to what was going on and to know that we do have some control, we do have a voice but if you

don't use it, then the decisions are made for us.

It's interesting because, really, that record goes back to a project I had written maybe in 2011 and I wrote about Black Bottom and how those neighbourhoods in Detroit were destroyed and how this didn't just happen in Detroit, it happened in every urban city across the United States and it's still happening in some places - the whole redlining, segregation... So I went back to that project and continued working on it, covering other cities, gathering photographs of neighbourhoods before and after, quotes, newspaper articles and continued to write libretto if you will, and I've been touring that with the visuals, a band with a vocalist and someone speaking about it. Afterwards, we do a Q&A with the community because a lot of times people don't know that this happened. These are adults that didn't know that it happened or that it's still happening and it's important for people to get involved. I feel like I'm getting more involved and more interested in communities and wanting other people, other artists, to open their eyes to how they can use their music and what they can do with this information.

What would you say to artists who understand the power of their platforms and the importance of using them, but are perhaps a bit hesitant to use their platforms for social commentary?

Well, I think it's the way that you do it. I think, at this age, I would not to go on stage and talk politics but just use the music. If it has words or just brings things to people's attention through the music and you're not necessarily taking a side or preaching at people with the music, you're just pointing something out, you're leaving it there in a very beautiful or artistic place. You're just putting it out there for others to hear, to see and to think about. For young artists that are maybe on a label, their label may say no, we don't want you to do that and I think you just have to be in a space where you're comfortable with that. I'm at an age now where

I do my own records and you know, I don't give a damn. You know? I've been sued, I've been this, I've been that - whatever - but I'm not banging people over the head. I'm just putting it out there - here's a thing, here's a subject, here's an idea, here's a thought and people can do with it what they will.

The impact of Regina's work is significant and we continue the conversation in the second part of this interview in our next magazine. I will leave you with this beautiful comment, left as a review for Regina's *Paganini: After A Dream* CD, on Amazon, of all places, by Michael T Flora

'What a story of a little girl from Detroit. If this is what comes out of Detroit, then somebody needs to save it. A woman I was dating took me to see Regina Carter in Cleveland as she was out promoting this album. All I can say is...I looked over at my friend and we both had tears coming out of our eyes. That's powerful music. I have purchased at least 10 to give as gifts. '

Interview by Fiona Ross

**REGINA CARTER
WEBSITE [CLICK HERE](#)**

NABOU CLAERHOUT



EVERYTHING NABOU CLAERHOUT & THE TROMBONE ENSEMBLE

BY ISABEL MARQUEZ

From discovering the trombone at age 9 to becoming a bold voice within the Belgian contemporary jazz scene, Nabou Claerhout has led, developed, and contributed to various projects across Europe. Since her studies at the Royal Academy in London and Codarts, Nabou has been teaching at the Kortrijk Conservatory, and Wilrijk music academies, and researching at the Arts and Research Institute in Antwerp. After the launch of her initial quartet NABOU, with their 2019 EP 'Hubert', Claerhout has embarked on a wide range of projects, from working with the Ghent Youth Jazz Orchestra to winning the 'Zilveren Notekraker Award and performing at several prominent events, like the North Sea Jazz Festival and London Jazz Festival.

Her most recent project, The Trombone Ensemble, is made up of 5 trombonists and a 3-member rhythm section, coming together in the Spring of 2022 and releasing an album on November 3rd, 2023. Nabou composed their entire repertoire herself, exploring all the sonic and textural qualities that the trombone has to offer.

When Nabou started looking for her dream jazz musicians to join her on this project, she looked to the Belgian jazz scene, but also to the European jazz scene more generally: The Netherlands, the UK and Germany. The line-up includes Nabou Claerhout (Trombone, compositions), Rory Ingham (Trombone), Peter Delannoye (Trombone), Nathan Surquin (Trombone), Tobias Herzog (Bass

trombone, tuba), + GUEST: Robin Eubanks (Trombone), Gijs Idema (Guitar), Cyrille Obermüller (Double bass), Daniel Jonkers (Drums).

I wanted to get a better idea of why the Trombone Ensemble has always been such an aspirational goal for Nabou, and how the Belgian scene has treated her as a woman instrumentalist and composer.

Firstly, could you tell me a bit about your musical background?

I am a trombonist and after my conservatory studies, I focused mainly on my own quartet NABOU. That culminated in a wonderful series of concerts, an EP 'Hubert' (2019) and the first full album 'You Know' (2021). Then I started experimenting with other musicians, for more 'signature' projects of my own: CLAERHOUT/BAAS/PEET, the duo Lynn Cassiers & Nabou Claerhout, and Trombone Ensemble Nabou Claerhout are all results of this.

In recent years, I have also been asked more often to compose for theatre performances and may create a new project as one of LOD-Muziektheater's house composers.

Today, in addition to my own projects, I am active as a freelance trombonist in several projects: AM. OK, Ictus Ensemble, David Bowden Quartet, ...

PHOTO BY MONDAY JR





What drew you to the trombone as your main instrument?

Well, it was the warm sound of the trombone that touched me so much. And still does. But also, the different possibilities with the instrument. It can be powerful and punchy as well as soft, warm, and velvety, ... And I love that it is so close to the voice. That makes it superhuman. But so also fragile or very rough. And that's what I love about it.

Who are your musical influences? Who are your key role models?

When I was little, my sister gave me a DVD, "My first name is Maceo", by Maceo Parker. This documentary/live show DVD featured trombonist Fred Wesley and seeing his playing made me feel something happening in my body that music had not yet done to me. It was also at that moment that I was sure I wanted to do something in the jazz

direction. Because now I had seen that it doesn't necessarily have to be 'classical'. Besides, I have always had a huge admiration for Beyonce because she was touring with a female band at the time. That was really something unseen 'back then'. The longer I was into jazz, the more real jazz musicians emerged. Scofield, Metheny, Mehlau, Akinmusire, but certainly also Carla Bley, Esperanza Spalding...

Did you feel represented in jazz as a female trombonist?

There are not masses of trombonists in jazz anyway when it comes to bandleaders. I also did a lot of big band work and then you do encounter other trombonists. And female ones too. When I studied in Rotterdam, we had an average of 12 jazz trombonists over the years at school. And I was never the only woman on trombone. From an early age, I always sat next to a female trombonist a few years older in

the local brass band. She took an equally nice conservatoire course. So as far as I was concerned, it was the most normal thing for female trombonists.

Did you find it difficult to establish yourself as a female instrumentalist in Belgium?

Well, not really. I have to say that I didn't really spend much time on it during my college years. It is only when you enter the 'Real jazz/music world' (haha) that you are confronted with it all the time. And I must say I don't always like that very much. It's definitely we came from a far too long period where it was/is unnecessarily difficult for female musicians. And something did need to change. It's just a shame when it's labelled to you unasked. I just want to make good music. And I think anyone striving for that regardless of woman or man should be allowed to do so. I look forward to it no longer being necessary to spotlight female musicians and it becomes the most normal thing in the world. Just as it felt for me before I entered that "real jazz/music world".

What is the jazz scene like in Belgium? Is there a distinct gender imbalance?

The jazz scene in Belgium is hugely diverse. We are surrounded by a large number of great musicians, each in their own way, searching for a new sound. It is enormously diverse and that makes it mega-adventurous. There is a large 'free jazz' (or anything close to it) community, but people also experiment with electronics. I sometimes have the feeling that the Belgian jazz scene brings together all the other countries. New composition levels from the Netherlands, the electronic excesses of the Swedish scene and the trance playing of many London jazz scene musicians.

There is an increasing presence of female musicians in the scene. Is it in balance...? To me, there is only a problem if someone would like to play music and because of their gender is held back, educationally or in the business itself. Personally, I haven't

experienced that (yet). All in all, the Belgian jazz scene is just something you really need to check out.

Could you tell us a bit more about your newest release?

The Trombone Ensemble is a dream come true for me. In the second part of my studies, I started working on my own compositions.

Sound-wise, I always looked for the warmth of the trombone. This is not to say that I do not dare to give full throttle on my trombone. :) But apart from that warm sound, I quickly started looking for more. In a quartet context, I quickly ended up with effects. But acoustic too, there is a lot to find. How do I keep my lips in my mouthpiece, where do I put my tongue when I vibrate my lips. These are all elements that influence the sound of the trombone.

A "Trombone Ensemble" is not a new thing. There have been many before us. But my goal with this ensemble was to present those new sounds, that whole spectrum of the trombone. And doing that together with other trombonists, that's just kicking. Playing with trombonists with whom my paths have crossed over the past 10 years is just a dream.

And then the absolute icing on the cake... Robin Eubanks!

In terms of jazz trombone, Robin is a mega legend. Who at the time blew a new wind in the trombone world? Well, it could not have been more beautiful.

What can we expect from you in the future? What do you want to do next?

For the moment, the focus is mainly on the Trombone Ensemble since the album has only just been released and...

NABOU CLAERHOUT
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PHOTO BY MONDAY JR

AMY GADIAGA



PHOTO BY FIONA ROSS

AMY GADIAGA HAS ARRIVED

Bassist, vocalist and composer Amy Gadiaga has been kicking up a storm! Recently nominated as best newcomer by the Parliamentary Jazz Awards and signed by Jazz Re:Freshed, we have been thrilled to follow and support Amy's work. Performing at our recent London Jazz Festival events, Amy not only demonstrates that she is one to watch but that she has arrived – and what an arrival!

Born in Paris and based in London having completed her degree at the prestigious Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Amy beautifully combines influences from Betty Carter and Wayne Short to D'Angelo and Michael Jackson and celebrates art, freedom and black pride in her performances. With a partnership with Fender and new music to be released soon, after her critically acclaimed debut and Jazz FM track of the

You were born in Paris but moved to London to study at Trinity. How do you find life as a musician in London compared to Paris?

I was born in the outskirts of Paris which is called the Banlieue. It's important to know that the Banlieue, unlike Paris, is deprived of a lot of opportunity academically and culturally, amongst other things. So, I would sometimes go to Paris but never felt like I belonged there. Also, I moved to London when I was just 18 so I didn't experience Paris as an adult, but I did go to a few jams. I can say that London is much more open to artistry and collaboration. I'd bump into someone, and they would give me a chance. I don't think that could happen that easily in France, but on a more positive note, I think that in French people are more inclined to excellence and quality in my opinion. Things tend to feel more real there and less surface level.

You studied double bass, but singing has become really important to you. Can you tell us how singing became part of your work?

I always sang at school but never ever thought I could do it professionally as I couldn't identify with any popular singers at the time. So, I left it alone and focused on learning instruments. In my first year at the conservatoire, I had to learn a large quantity of standards in a short amount of time, and singing the head in the practice room really helped. I could already sing and play at the same time because I'm an Esperanza Spalding fan, but my rhythm teacher at the time (Pat Davey) told me that this was a unique skill and that I should explore further. A year later in 2019 I joined the Roundhouse choir after a massive audition was held, and I got in with 2 other singers so that made me believe in myself as a potential serious singer.

You play double bass and electric bass, and your recent sell out gig at the London Jazz Festival, was all on double bass. Do you have a preference and how do the different basses make you feel when you play them?

I prefer double bass at this moment. Electric bass has been an obsession when I was younger but is now linked to me migrating to the U.K, leaving my family behind and for a long time I couldn't play it without feeling some kind of bitterness. I completely stopped playing it until very recently when I got the privilege to go on tour with this incredible artist Jonah Yano. For the first time in years, I thoroughly enjoyed playing electric bass and I feel like I'm ready to rediscover the instrument.



PHOTO BY FIONA ROSS

Double bass is still my preference because of how giving it is. You don't have to plug it in or do anything fancy to receive the warmest sound from it. It's interesting to play.

There are still not many female bassists and historically, this has been an issue – we need more powerful role models, like you! Have you faced any issues, as a female bassist?

I think that there's plenty of female bassists nowadays, especially in London. I haven't faced any issues as a bassist per say, but just a feminine presence, I did struggle at conservatoire which is a male dominated environment. Though my classmates were all lovely, very few of them cared to include me in anything. I was the only female instrumentalist in my year and there were 2 other ladies that were singers. I can recall the moment that made me think "I better go out there and create something because if I stick around my classmates, I won't get to play much."

One of my classmates had a gig at Oliver's organized by the conservatoire and he invited everyone in year to play on different tunes. Everyone but us ladies. I was so cheery and supporting the band on stage until I realised that my whole year got to play except for us.

Your influences include 'old school jazz singers tradition of musicians such as Betty Carter or Wayne Shorter and modern bops of artists such as d'angelo and Kimbra'. Who inspires you musically and shaped your artistry? Can you tell us what it is about their work that inspires you?

My main music hero is none other than Michael Jackson. I was in elementary school when he died, and my parents loved him, so I was very shocked to see him go that way. One thing that my mother always used to say when he was still alive is 'He's a genius but he's making terrible decisions'. Over the years I became fascinated with the idea of being



such a fine-tuned being, and yet have such a struggle to live a normal life. One of the main reasons why he's my hero, is that through all his difficulties, he never stopped creating and getting better at his craft.

Another hero of mine is Betty Carter, a true pioneer, uncompromising jazz legend and unique singer. Her way of doing it is so distinct and that's what draws me to her so much. I got into B.C the very first day of Conservatoire when Cleveland Watkiss, one of the teachers, recommended a tune for her. Later, a jazz journalist told me about her allegedly having to work as a cashier rather than adapt her sound to achieve more commercial success at the end of the bebop era. I love this so much.

I also am a big Stevie Wonder fan mainly because of his compositions. King Krule because of his writing, Graham Coxon for the same reasons. Twinkie Clark because her music heals and George Harrison for the same reason. Sampha for everything. I have also loved kpop since my early teens and Japanese culture. I think that I grew up in a very uncolorful era in French culture and I found comfort in Mangas and East Asian pop culture as a kid, and am still very into it. Some of my favourites are Nctdream, BiBi, Youra, and Naruto's theme songs.

Your first single 'Everything I Do', released in August 2022, talks about purpose and people-pleasing. Can you tell us about this?

To be honest I do not remember the mindset I was in when I wrote the song, but I can confidently say that I'm not a people pleaser! I do things in my own time and am quite the opposite so maybe I wrote this song for someone else haha...

Your next single, 'Nephi', released April 2023, talks about 'self-awareness and the process of identifying negative thoughts'. Is this something you have struggled with or seen people struggle with?

Well same again, I wrote this song so long ago (2020). It goes to show how long it takes to release material as an independent artist as it's very expensive when you want it to look right. right. But going back to the song, which is my favourite piece I've written, I remember playing piano in the practice room and the song wrote itself very quickly. I think it was about embracing darkness or something.

Your next single is coming out next year – can you tell us about this?

I can say that I'm excited for it to be out in the world as it's going to be my first E.P.

You are a brilliant role model to many embodying female empowerment, beauty and artistry. Do you have any words of wisdom to women out there or perhaps young girls thinking that they are not seen?

Thank you, that's very kind! For me growing up, I would spend hours online digging for inspiration. I found it in anime, in Michael Jackson and old hello kitty tribute blogs. I think that as long as you are curious and open minded, the world is your oyster because everybody used to tell me that the life I'm living now was not even an option. Therefore, if you're creative and keep inspired, there shouldn't be much holding you back. Also, don't expect anything from anyone. If people want to help you, nice but don't wait on them or rely on them to make things happen XOXO

AMY GADIAGA
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CHINA MOSES BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

BEHIND THE LENS

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

You will find stunning photography throughout this magazine and we are hugely grateful for the inspiring photographers that allow us to publish their work and truly bring our magazines to life. In this edition we are proud to feature the following photographers:

Monika S Jakubowska

Tatiana Gorilovsky

Enid Farber

YAZZ AHMED
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ronnie scott's

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THE ALL FEMALE LONDON GAY BIG BAND
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TOULOUSE LAUTREC JAZZ CLUB



PHOTO BY ENID FARBER

BETTY CARTER



BETTY CARTER:

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

BY NICK LEA

All journeys have to start somewhere, and my discovery and appreciation of Betty Carter started rather late and only recently, with the album *Look What I Got!* Picked up on LP in my local independent record shop in Kendal for the bargain price of £3.00, it then sat at home waiting to be listened to.

They say that all good things come to those that wait, and in this case the wait was practically self-inflicted. A frequent visitor to 151 Records, a little shop that specialises in vinyl and has a plethora of good music on offer, I had picked up *Look What I Got!* on several occasions only to leave it behind. However, ultimately good sense prevailed and to coin a phrase, I put it in my basket and secured the purchase.

It would be a few weeks before the opportunity arose to sit down and listen, and when I did, my mind was blown. Why had I not heard Betty Carter before now? How can I find out more about this incredible artist? How does she sing like that? Her scatting is out of this world! How do you swing that hard? What else can I listen too? All these thoughts were tumbling through my mind as I listened. Exhausted and exhilarated by what I heard, I made another cup of coffee and flipped the LP back over to side one to listen again, as if I had not quite believed what I had heard the first time around.

It appeared I had inadvertently picked a good place to start my appreciation of Betty Carter, as after its release in 1988, Carter won a Grammy for Best Female Jazz Vocal Performance. During the 1980s, Carter was giving some of the up-and-coming young jazz musicians of the time, believing that they inspired her with their youth and passion to play as much as she inspired them, and the band assembled for *Look What I Got!* reflected that philosophy.

Featuring collective personnel that includes pianists Benny Green and Stephen Scott, bassists Ira Coleman and Michael Bowie and Winard Harper, Lewis Nash and Troy Davis on drums, there is no shortage of talent on offer; and on four of the nine tracks Carter brings in an additional voice with Don Braden's tenor saxophone.

It is rare that an album makes such a vivid and lasting impression on first hearing. So what was it that struck such a chord on hearing *Look What I Got!*? Well, firstly I had heard no one else sing like her before. Her voice was completely original, her phrasing and diction was impeccable, and the words were so clear even at fast tempos. And she swung, hard! Her innate sense of swing and timing was quite incredible,



PHOTO BY ENID FARBER



so much so that when listening to the album she had me completely spellbound within the first two songs. The opening title track is taken at a gentle tempo, but her phrasing of the lyric is a wonder. The way she emphasises certain words and stretches them out within the overall shape of the melody is quite extraordinary, and the scat chorus is so assured and sophisticated, as to many an instrumentalist to shame.

This is immediately followed by 'That Sunday, That Summer': from its attractive opening statement of tenor and voice over Lewis Nash's brushwork, before a switch to sticks propels the band forward with a delectable swing. Braden's accompaniment on tenor saxophone is a perfect foil to Carter's vocal, and the singer's penchant for constant and sudden changes in tempo never throw the band.

This is an album that just seems to keep on giving and Carter delivers up a remarkably fresh interpretation of Jimmy Van Heusen and Jimmy Burke's 'Imagination', with her opening scat setting the tone beautifully. There is an unexpected delight in 'The Good Life' penned by Jack Reardon and Sacha Distel with its gentle swing, lilting rhythm and Carter's expressive vocal, and not forgetting the amazing scatting on 'All I Got' by Diane Cole.

Perhaps the most endearing song on this exceptional album, is Carter's rendition of George and Ira Gershwin's 'The Man I Love'. The opening with Carter and saxophonist Don Braden is breathtaking and sets up what is a deeply warm and expressive reading, that also captures Carter in an exploratory mood, with a lovely solo from pianist Benny Green too.

Continuing my journey and listening, I delved back into Carter's early career. A first album recorded in 1953 has proved elusive at present, however there is still plenty of material available from her formative years, but perhaps a bit of background information is useful at this point.

Betty Carter was born Lillie Mae Jones on 16th May 1929 in Michigan. Coming from a musical background, her father was the musical director of the local church in Detroit, where her parents had moved the family to and where Betty grew up. She received very little support from her parents and quickly developed a resilience and independence as a youngster that would stay with her throughout her life. As a teenager she studied piano at the Detroit Conservatory, but her instrumental abilities were limited, and by the age of sixteen she had set her sights on singing as her chosen path.

Signing with an agency in the 1940's, Carter continued to develop her vocal style that was already showing signs of an original and contemporary voice. Inspired by Sarah Vaughan and Billie Holiday, she was also taken by the new music called bebop and had the opportunity to perform with Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, who would later recommend her to Ray Charles.

A two-and a half-year stint with the Lionel Hampton band beginning in 1948 would earn Carter a reputation as being the last big band vocalist. While an obvious boost to her career, her stay with Hampton was not always a harmonious one and the two would frequently clash. Carter did not hide her frustration with confines of the swing style of the band, while Hampton was not too enamoured with the vocalist's scat improvisations.

After leaving the Hampton Band in 1951, Carter made her way to New York where she would work hard at her music and gig extensively, believing that she should earn her credentials and pay her dues. The hard work would pay off, and Betty Carter made some outstanding records in the mid-fifties with pianist Ray Bryant in 1955 and then with alto saxophonist and arranger Gig Gryce the following year.

From a discographic point of view, these

recordings spread across several releases can be a little confusing to track down. The recordings with Ray Bryant made on 13th May, 1955 and released by Columbia as Meet Betty Carter and Ray Bryant, actually only features Carter on six of the twelve selections, the others being given over to the Ray Bryant Trio. The six titles that Betty brings her already inimitable vocals to, have been re-released by Columbia in 1980 as part of an album titled Social Call that mark the first time the cuts made with Gigi Gryce and a big band have been available.

The Meet Betty Carter and Ray Bryant tracks are a wonderful way to hear how Carter developed her own way of delivering a lyric. The opening 'Moonlight in Vermont' is as far away from Billie Holiday's version as it was possible to get, and her rendition of 'Gone With The Wind' makes the hair stand up on the back of the neck; so flawless is it in its beauty, and what a range Carter has in her voice. As if to turn things on their head, Carter and the trio swing furiously on 'The Way You Look Tonight'.

The tracks with Gigi Gryce on Social Call feature arrangements that are ideally suited to Carter from the lovely opening number 'Tell Him I Said Hello' to the brassy title track written by Gryce with lyrics by Jon Hendricks. For a vocalist that ultimately will be remembered for the way in which she would mould a small group to react to her every whim, she is a superb big band singer. If proof is still needed just check out the Latin American vibe of 'Frenesi' that morphs into a swinging bebop scat and a tender 'Let's fall In Love' over Milt Hinton's double bass, before the band comes in swinging.

Quite why the recordings with Gryce were left unreleased for so long is a mystery, but in February 1958 Betty Carter and Gigi Gryce were back in the studio together to record a dozen titles that would be released as Out There (also known as Out There With Betty Carter). Twelve songs with a bebop big band that were able to support Carter with a panache that is exciting and fresh. Even on

the ballad 'I Can't Help It' written by Carter, the vocalist swings as only she can. 'But Beautiful' is just that, and a dramatic version of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's 'Something Wonderful' neatly sums up this gem of an album.

In August 1960, Carter would record what can be regarded as her 'standards' album, The Modern Sound of Betty Carter. Arranged and conducted by Richard Wess with a studio orchestra, the title almost seems at odds with the songs and style of the music recorded but this should take nothing away from a superlative performance from Betty Carter on each and every one of the twelve selections.

The arrangements are typical treatments of the standard repertoire, and there is nothing to mark them out as remarkable. But what makes the album a success and a joy listen to is Carter's voice in what is surely the straightest context she has ever sung in. Among the highlights of the album is a lovely rendition of 'My Reverie' and a swinging 'Jazz (Ain't Nothin' But Soul)' that could serve as Carter's mantra and mission statement.

Taking heed of Miles Davis's recommendation, Ray Charles indeed took notice of Betty Carter, and from 1960 to 1963 Carter would tour with Charles and his band. In August 1960, the pair would enter the recording studio to begin the album that would be released as Ray Charles and Betty Carter with the recording completed in June 1961 and released a couple of months later.

While this undoubtedly raised Carter's profile and with the pair's version of 'Baby, It's Cold Outside' topping the R&B charts, it sits aside from Carter's usual output. Little room for scat or improvisation, these however remain endearing renditions of popular standards.

The orchestrations by Marty Paich are tasteful and not overly sentimental, and if the backing vocals by The Jack Halloran Singers time lock the music, then Charles and his band along with Carter make a decent fist of the charts. Carter is certainly at home on swingers that include 'Side by Side' and coming into the festive season the song now indelibly associated with this time of year, 'Baby, It's Cold Outside' is always worth a listen.

This increasing fame nearly put paid to Carter's individuality and a feeling of isolation again crept into the singer's psyche. Unwilling to continue singing well-known pop songs, like many of her generation, she was losing her audience to the upsurge of rock'n'roll and the popular music of the day. She managed to survive by working with a trio and continuing to book her own gigs whenever and wherever she could. At the end of the 1960s, wishing to keep control of her own music and releasing what she wanted, Carter formed her own independent label Bet-Car Records. This, while a difficult time for Carter, would see a resurgence in her own creativity and a spate of marvellous albums.

One of the very best of these, and possibly one of the greatest live albums of the time, is The Audience with Betty Carter recorded over three nights on 6, 7 and, 8, December 1979, live at San Francisco's Great American Music Hall. The resulting double album captures Carter in exuberant form, and the whole album is a vibrant reflection of the joy in making music that the singer conveys in her own inimitable way.

The album's title is no play on words, as the audience is with Betty Carter all the way. Carter has always been a live performer at heart, and her delight in playing in front of an audience is evident in each and every song and also in her banter between numbers. The set has





all of Carter's trademarks in an incredible choice of repertoire that she reinvents and then presents, as if the song was written for her to perform. The band of John Hicks on piano, bassist Curtis Lundy and Kenny Washington on drums are kept on their collective toes with Betty's now famous sudden shifts in tempo, and while they all solo well, it is the way that they accompany the vocalist that lifts the music.

Featuring a mixture of standards along with her own compositions Carter dazzles with her rendition of 'The Trolley Song', 'If I Could Write a Book', and closes with her signature tune 'Open the Door'. Carter astounds with her take on 'My Favourite Things', and the liberties taken with 'Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most', in terms of the tempo and how she recasts the melody, have to be heard to be believed. In terms of pure improvisational invention, the opening 'Sounds (Moving On)' hits the listener with a twenty-five minute tour de force of a scat solo that never flags, with Carter appearing to pluck her words and phrases out of thin air.

Eight years later, Betty Carter would record another live album at San Francisco's Great American Music Hall, this time a duet concert with Carmen McRae and released as *The Carmen McRae-Betty Carter Duets*. If it doesn't quite have the fire and passion of *The Audience With Betty Carter*, the music performed by these two great vocalists exudes a feel good factor in the obvious delight they take in each other's singing. No cutting contest, just some great songs superbly sung. The way the two greet each other and 'chat' on 'What's New?' is like eavesdropping on their pre-gig conversation, while the other material is immaculately performed as genuine duets, often intimate, in a setting that is not often bestowed on these evergreens.

Quite how the arrangements for the songs are arrived at has a nice air of mystery, as each sound is fresh and spontaneous. "Am I Blue" is delivered with a tongue in cheek humour, and the unison voices on Oliver

Nelson's 'Stolen Moments' is a delight before easing into an easy swing and the vocalists splitting the verses between themselves.

A couple of medleys feature in the programme and two wonderful performances of Ellington tunes in 'Sophisticated Lady' followed by "It Don't Mean a Thing (If Ain't Got That Swing)" featuring exquisite scat choruses from Carter and McRae. A superb live performance and a chance to hear two great vocalists on one album, with the two women obviously enjoying themselves immensely.

As always relishing in the live situation, Carter recorded the album *Feed The Fire* at the Royal Festival Hall, London on 30th October 1993, with a supergroup of Geri Allen on piano, Dave Holland on bass and Jack DeJohnette on drums. Geri Allen's playing on Carter's tune 'Love Notes' almost steals the song away from Carter; so beautiful is her solo and accompaniment to the vocalist. Carter is at her very best here and repays the compliment to the pianist by turning in a stellar performance on the title track written by Geri Allen. Holland and DeJohnette are a dream team, both propulsive and responsive from the moment they take their cues from both Allen and Carter.

There would be just one more Betty Carter album to follow *Feed The Fire*, with the studio album *I'm Yours, You're Mine* recorded in January 1996 and released the following year. Although continuing to tour and help discover new talent, Betty Carter's health deteriorated in 1998. She was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and passed away on 26th September, 1996.

One of the truly original jazz vocalists, we are lucky that she left behind a rich legacy in her recordings, many of which are now becoming available on CD or through digital releases.



ALEX
CLARKE

FINDING THE RIGHT PATH

AN INTERVIEW WITH YOUNG SAXOPHONIST, COMPOSER AND EDUCATOR ALEX CLARKE WHO IS FINDING HER OWN WAY IN WHAT PROMISES TO BE A HUGE SUCCESSFUL FULL-TIME CAREER IN JAZZ.

BY KIM CYPHER

In this business there is no set pathway to becoming a successful jazz musician...and what exactly does 'successful' mean? Unlike many other careers where there is a set route for progression - climbing up the ranks, gaining qualifications and achieving your aspirations- the music business can be approached in many ways. It is about finding your own way, going on your own unique journey, ultimately taking the path that's right for you. Something Alex Clarke is clearly doing as she navigates her way through her thriving musical journey.

I first met Alex when she came along to one of my gigs at Pizza Express 'live' in Birmingham. I knew of her and was already aware of this young talent making a name for herself on the UK jazz circuit. She was studying at The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire at the time. I remember hearing shortly after this initial meeting, that Alex had made the brave decision to walk away from her music studies to devote more time to actively getting herself 'out there'. It's fair to say that since then Alex has been going from strength to strength, with notable achievements and awards including: her debut album 'Mirage' in 2018; British Jazz Awards 'Rising Star' in 2019; BBC Young Jazz Musician Finalist in 2020 and Parliamentary Jazz Awards 'Jazz Newcomer' Nominee in 2021 and 2022. Her latest album 'Only A Year' was released in the summer of 2022 and featured hugely respected David Newton, Dave Green and Clark Tracey. She also has a full calendar of live performances, highlighting Alex as one of the most in-demand and versatile saxophonists on the scene.

I chatted with Alex to find out more about her musical journey and how she has been finding her own way in the jazz world.

Kim - What first inspired your interest in music?

Alex - "I don't come from a particularly musical or creative background. However, we did have a piano in the house, and from the age of 5, I remember spending hours messing around, trying to work out melodies I knew. I think this first piqued my interest in music.

I was very fortunate to go to a school in Cheshire which had a wonderful music department, full of opportunities and inspiring teachers. I began piano lessons but still craved the sociability of being in an ensemble, so was handed a recorder and joined the wind band. This naturally progressed on to the flute. I remember at the time wanting a saxophone, but being told it would 'disturb the neighbours', and the flute would be easier to carry on the school bus!

Unlike many children who are nagged to practice their instruments, I was totally self-motivated and wouldn't put it down. The music department was where I always felt most at home, and I'd grab every opportunity to play.

When I was about 11, I went away to a department residential, and could hear the jazz band rehearsing in the room next door. It just sounded so much fun; I could hear them improvising and I really wanted to join in, but I wasn't allowed to on flute. So, I got home and immediately asked my parents for a saxophone. They relented and a few weeks later, I had figured out enough to join the school jazz band and had begun to delve into the world of improvisation.



PHOTO BY ANDREW CLEVDERT

It all seemed to happen quite quickly from there, as it was only a year and a half after buying a sax that I found myself playing in public for the first time, sitting in with my friends Amy Roberts and Richard Exall at Pershore Jazz Festival. Several things happened in the meantime:

My Dad started buying me jazz CDs from local charity shops - just compilation albums - and I began to go down the rabbit hole of listening, discovering what I liked, learning about the most influential players, and beginning to try to emulate them by playing along with records. I didn't really understand anything about harmony, I just listened so much that I began to learn what sounded right, and what didn't work.

My flute teacher said to me "you know, if you fancied a career in music, you

could probably go for it". That was it; she planted that seed in my mind, and I wanted nothing else!

Kim - Your musical versatility and wide-ranging repertoire are impressive assets for somebody of such a young age. How have you developed these?

Alex - "When I first began to get serious about jazz, I started going out to lots of local gigs. There were two venues in particular: Wilmslow Jazz Club, a straight-ahead venue, and The Wilbraham Arms, a fortnightly trad night just down the road. I'd cheekily ask to sit in with whoever was playing, and the promoters would very kindly allow this. One night I'd find myself playing a load of traditional tunes I'd never heard before, the next, I'd be standing next to Alan Barnes playing a new bop head I'd just learnt.



I believe there is so much to learn from playing New Orleans music, of which I did a lot. It has given me such a solid grounding in functional harmony, really strengthened my ability to listen, hear changes, and be sympathetic and complimentary alongside other horn players.”

Kim - I really admire your strength and determination to make decisions and choices that work for you. What made you decide to leave your musical studies at The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire after a year to follow your own career path in music?

Alex - “I couldn't wait to begin music college, and I was so excited to begin studying at the conservatoire. However, I quickly began to realise that the lifestyle didn't really suit me. Until then, I had been used to fitting practice in around my studies and other hobbies. When I suddenly found it being my only focus of the day and something I "had" to do, I think it somehow took the joy out of playing and, to my concern, I found myself falling out of love with the saxophone. For the final 4 months leading up to our end of year exams, I couldn't even bring myself to get my sax out of the case. I moved back home and poured my energy into gigs in a desperate attempt to rekindle my love for the instrument.

It was understandably an extremely difficult decision to leave the conservatoire. It was undoubtedly making me a better, more well-rounded musician and so many aspects were hugely beneficial. But equally, I was learning just as much on gigs, being on the bandstand with players better than me. I took the decision to leave at the end of my first year, taking a full-time job at Warwick School. This lifestyle suited me much better, and I was back to loving what I was doing, filling my days and nights with teaching, arranging, and playing.”

Kim - Our paths have crossed at various Jazz Festivals such as Pershore and Upton, where I met your parents. How important has family support been for you?

Alex - “If it hadn't been for my parents' support whilst I was first starting out, my career development certainly wouldn't have taken this trajectory, and perhaps I wouldn't be a musician at all. From encouraging me to begin music lessons when I first joined primary school, to ferrying me all around the country as I began gigging but was still too young to drive, their support has always been truly invaluable. Despite their generosity and encouragement during these early stages, I was still always aware that they didn't really think it was a viable career option. "Why don't you keep it as a hobby? You'll enjoy it more that way." I heard this countless times. I completely understood their reservations; it's an unusual, unpredictable profession, far removed from the sort of job they'd always imagined me doing.

Around the time of Sixth Form, they even took me on a tour of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges, trying to show me what I would be missing out on by studying a conservatoire course instead! I really appreciated their concern, but ultimately it simply further cemented my stubborn desire to pursue music. I really hope that I continue to prove to them that I made the right decision, and I still feel a little nervous when I know they're in the audience. As clichéd as it sounds, I do really want to make them proud.”

Kim - You spent 3 years working at Warwick School as their Music Assistant whilst also juggling 'live' performances. How did you find the transition from employment to becoming self-employed when you gave that up?

Alex - “I must say, I really do miss the consistency, routine, and camaraderie of being on a team of staff, and the reward of seeing the development of students as they moved up through the



there will always be things we want to improve upon, develop and learn. I always said that all I wanted was to simply 'earn a living out of music'. And I'm doing that, so I think 14-year-old me would be very pleased."

Kim - What has been your proudest moment?

Alex - "Releasing my latest quartet album. I procrastinated so much before finally getting on with this, waiting for the perfect moment where my playing would be at its best, hoping that if I left it a bit longer, it would somehow be better. I eventually realised that there will never be the perfect moment. An album is simply a snapshot of where we are right now; once I'd comprehended that, I was so proud to release something alongside my favourite trio that really represents who I am as a musician right now. Now, time for the next one..."

Alex should certainly feel incredibly proud of all she has achieved at such a young age. Her journey is full of inspiration, dedication, hard work, determination, and a commitment to thrive and do her absolute best as she continues her unique musical journey.

possible. As I mentioned before, I honed a lot of my craft sitting in with bands, and absorbing all I could from playing with people far better than me."

Kim - You have achieved so much already and show so much promise for the world of jazz. What are your key aspirations and future plans?

Alex - "I'd particularly like to continue honing my writing style as I work more with my quartet. Whilst I love the sociability of playing, I equally love the solitary creativity of sitting at my laptop and piano, arranging and composing. I am always pushing my ears to hear more, to recognise harmony faster, and this certainly informs how I think about music whilst I'm playing it.

I'm also very much enjoying playing with the Clark Tracey Quintet. For me, it's the perfect balance of standards that I know and love, and more unusual repertoire that I otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to play. We have an ever-growing tour list for next year, and I am really looking forward to spending time on the road with this group of lovely, talented people.

I think one of the challenging, yet inspiring, things about being a musician, is that there isn't really a career end goal. There's no ceiling to aim for, and

and feel. Admittedly, I do sometimes feel a sense of imposter syndrome when working with such experienced and successful musicians, but we all enjoy playing together, and I really hope that comes across in the resulting output."

Kim - Life as a full-time jazz musician can have many challenges. What would you say have been your biggest challenges?

Alex - "In all honesty, there are some moments where I do feel slightly paranoid that I am only being given opportunities because of my gender, to fill some sort of quota or to diversify a band. I am not a fan of this tokenistic booking of women and would hate to think that I was on the gig simply to satisfy the statistics. We should be booked purely on the quality of our playing and how we are to interact with, both socially and professionally.

Secondly, to be truthful, it does also often cross my mind that perhaps I do spread myself too thinly when it comes to the different gigs I do. However, I do believe there is no shame in versatility and adaptability. I genuinely really enjoy the variety, meeting all sorts of people, and the challenge of playing authentically in whatever setting I find myself.

When it comes to taking work, I like to imagine a triangle, with each side representing the following: "nice people", "quality musicianship" and "good money". If any 2 sides of the triangle are fulfilled, then I'm up for it. This said, I will happily admit that there are a few things I do simply to earn a living! But I don't think anyone from any profession could say they enjoy every aspect of their job. I just feel very fortunate that I love the vast majority of what I do."

Kim - If you could give just one piece of advice to aspiring jazz musicians, what would it be?

Alex - "My advice would be to go out to see, play and listen to as much music as

school. However, it was the right career move to leave Warwick School, as there simply weren't enough hours in the day to do both jobs to the best of my ability. I now really enjoy the flexibility of complete self-employment; I honestly don't know how I ever managed to fit everything into my diary before!"

Kim - Your new album 'Only A Year' has a wonderful mix of innovative arrangements together with original compositions. I am intrigued to know how you came up with the idea of entitling New Orleans style track 'Beetroots Burn' as an anagram of Bourbon Street? I love it by the way!

Alex - "I am a huge fan of writing contrafacts: new melodies over existing chord sequences. Having grown up playing a lot of traditional New Orleans music, I was keen to write something that paid homage to my roots. I wanted the title to be something quirky where not everyone would get the reference; perhaps there are some people who just think I have a love (or hatred!) of Beetroots..."

Kim - You have been working with some of the finest names in British Jazz and prestigious ensembles including David Newton, Dave Green, Clark Tracey, Alan Barnes, Art Themen, The Simon Spillett Big Band and The Ronnie Scott's Jazz Orchestra. How has this come about and how is it working alongside such incredible experienced and accomplished players?

Alex - "I particularly love big band music and enjoy the challenge and discipline of blending within a section. I am extremely grateful to be working alongside such esteemed players, and I learn constantly from being on the bandstand with them. I am so delighted to be working in my quartet with Dave Newton, Dave Green and Clark Tracey. I had met Clark at college, as one of the tutors, and it was him that suggested forming my quartet. He asked me who I'd like to play with the most, and I immediately mentioned the two Daves. I'd always loved their phrasing, melodicism, and great time

PHOTO BY SARAH HICKSON

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TAMMY
KERNODLE

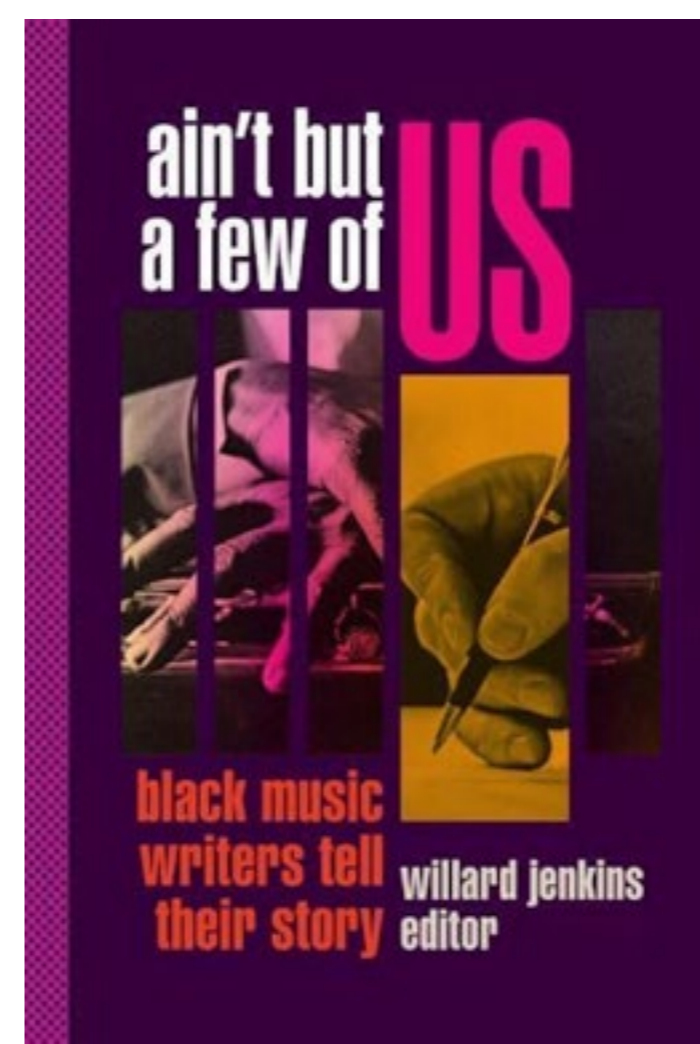
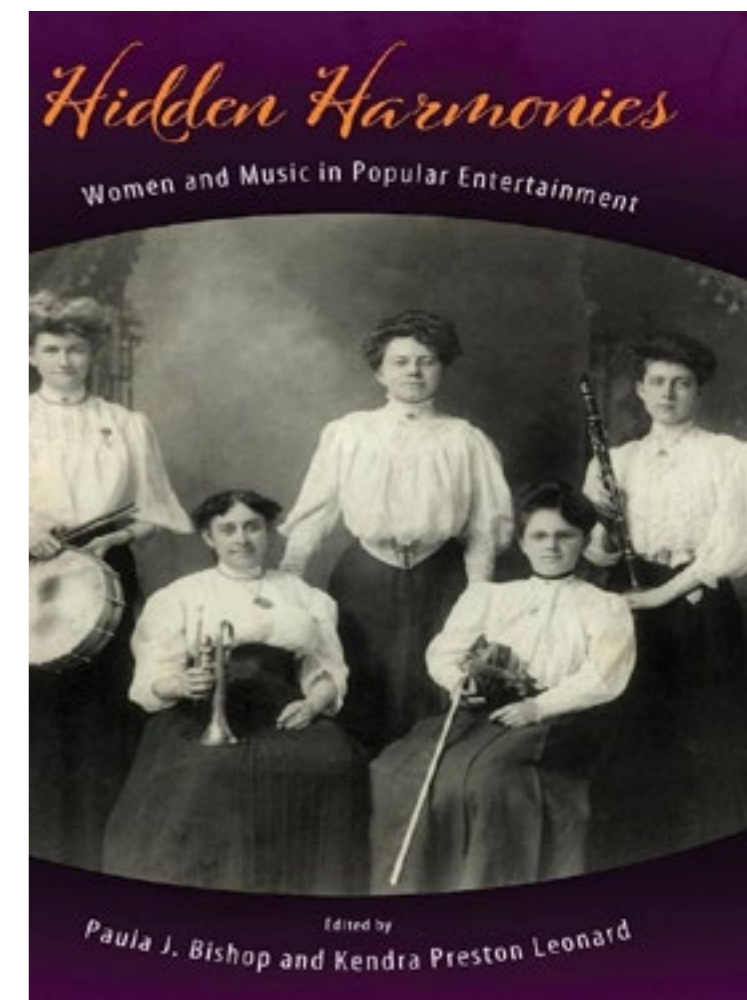


TAMMY KERNODLE IS AT THE TABLE

In the second part of our feature on the inspirational musicologist and author, Dr Tammy L Kernodle, Fiona Ross invites Tammy to be on guest on her Thoughts, Conversations and To Do Lists podcast series. Discussing Dr Tammy's essay 'Come Go with Me to Freedom Land: Black Women Musicians and the Unexplored Sonic History of the March on Washington' in the recently released book *Hidden Harmonies: Women and Music in Popular Entertainment*, it is an inspirational conversation and the most shared episode of the series on Spotify.

[To read our previous interview, click here.](#)

[To purchase the books discussed in both interviews, click on the images](#)





THE PHOTOGRAPHERS: ENID FARBER



**Melanie Charles, singer,
Montclair Jazz Festival, Montclair, NJ 9/2023**

**Brooklyn born and raised, jazz singer who blends
jazz, soul and R& B and has become a very celebrat-
ed young artist in the past year.**



Cyrus Chestnut, pianist portrait shot after his performance at the Middlesex Jazz Festival, in the Westerhoff Gallery, Metuchen, NJ 9/2023 during my solo exhibition of 27 jazz photos.



**Dorthaan Kirk,
Jazz Hero and Newark,
NJ's "First Lady of Jazz".**

One of the first people hired by Newark's jazz station WBGO and became the face of and a fierce advocate for the station. She served as Director of Community Relations and Special Events, among other roles over the years.

Dorthann has promoted, curated and produced jazz events throughout the region. She is also co-chair of Jazz Vespers at Bethany Baptist Church and consultant producer for Dorthann's Place jazz series at NJPAC. She is known as "Newark's First Lady of Jazz".

In 2003 she received a Discretionary Award from the JJA for her "humanitarian contributions" to Jazz. In 2013, she received the Humanitarian Award from the American Conference on Diversity, Essex County Chapter. In 2020, the National Endowment for the Arts gave her the Jazz Masters Fellowship for Jazz Advocacy.

Originally from Texas, she was married to jazz legend Rashaan Roland Kirk.

**Lily White,
alto, tenor and soprano saxophonist,
studio publicity shoot stills,
Fort Lee, NJ 10/2023.**

She has worked with Mario Bauza, the father of latin jazz, and his Afro-Cuban jazz orchestra, touring with him in the final years before his death. She was a regular member of master organist Jimmy McGriff's quartet from 1990-1994. She has done short stints with blues pianist Jay McShann, Dizzy Gillespie, and Celia Cruz to name a few. Recently, she has been working with Anthony Braxton and his tentet along with his Tri-centric orchestra, while still doing work with blues legend Roscoe Gordon on his new record.

Since the release of her first CD under her own name, "Somewhere Between Truth and Fiction" on Knitting Factory works, her band has played festivals and clubs in Germany, Sweden, Austria, Denmark, Lithuania, and Spain. In 1996, Lily was awarded with a Jazz Composition Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Also in 1996, her band was chosen by the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation for receiving matching funds from the Lila Wallace foundation for performances in not-for-profit locations around the U.S.A. In 1997, she has been awarded a "Meet the Composer" grant for an artist residency in a N.Y.C. school. Lily currently writes and performs with AudraroX which brings music to children and families, and is a member of the Douglass St. Composers Collective.



MIGDALIA
VAN
DER
HOVEN



PHOTO BY STUART LEEDS

TIME OUT WITH MIGDALIA VAN DER HOVEN

PHOTO BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

Team member and international award winning Mexican drummer Migdalia van der Hoven is breaking down barriers and paving the way for female drummers like no other. Named "Woman of the Year" in Mexico last year for her contributions to arts and culture, Migdalia is ambassador for the Hit Like a Girl Contest and has appeared on numerous panels across the world including the recent UK Drum Show. She is also a member of the National Jazz Orchestra of Mexico which supports young women through scholarships to continue their studies in jazz.

Endorsed by Canopus Drums, Vater Percussion, Bosphorus Cymbals and RTOM Corporation, her portfolio is significant: working across the UK's musical theatre, jazz and function scene, including main chair for SIX the Musical International Tour 2022- 2023 and deputy for the current Tour and West End run. Migdalia also launched her debut EP Girl Facing South at Ronnie Scott's and released her full album Point of Departure recorded at Abbey Road Studios in 2022.

Considering your childhood and growing up in Mexico, how did it feel to win Mexico Woman of the year?

It has given me lots of joy and pride, but most of all hope... Knowing that women are supporting women and recognising talent, effort and sacrifice - especially as someone living abroad and in a very competitive industry, such as the arts.

Tell us about your upcoming live album.

Well, this one is a bit interesting as it wasn't planned. We released our studio album last year and did a few gigs to support it, so in one of those the sound engineer from

Toulouse Lautrec recorded us and it sounded so good, we decided to master it and launch our next live album with more tunes that weren't included in the studio one. Really exciting as it gives a completely different energy and vibe.

The diversity of your portfolio is significant – how do you stay so versatile? What tips would you give others drummers?

I try to adapt, listen to the tracks and sound as close as possible to what is expected from me, but also offer a few things if there's room for that. I think treating each gig uniquely and preparing beforehand helps a lot. I try to turn up as prepared as possible, even if it's for rehearsals. I am also ready to adapt for any last minute changes.

You are very active on social media and in fact I believe your career really started to progress through your YouTube Videos. So, two questions on this, how important is social media for musicians and how do you stay on top of social media and posting considering how busy you are?

It's a bit of a full time job to be honest, but consistency and keeping true to yourself are quite important. I use it as a tool to find work but also inspire people to support each other and to know that dreams are possible. I also use it to keep family and friends from abroad knowing what I am up to.

You are one of the hardest working drummers in the UK right now – how do you juggle work, life and wellbeing?





I try to prioritise things, but always keep high standards in every gig. I try to organise my weeks/months way in advance and stick to those routines as best as I can. I try to stay relaxed and find ways (even while working) to get some rest. The more I enjoy the gig I am doing, the less it feels like work if that makes sense. I also have support from my family and colleagues. I feel that I still need to achieve more, so that drive is what keeps me going.

You are endorsed by a few companies – can you tell us about your endorsements, how you got them – and the gear!

I am currently endorsed by 5 companies - kit, cymbals, sticks, accessories and branding! Most of them are from the jazz world, but I use them for everything - speaking of versatility! Canopus is a Japanese brand that started as a snare brand, the quality of their snares is just another level. They are quite sensitive to tuning, so it's easy to adapt to any sound for different gigs. I recently used my bebop kit for a punk rock show and it worked! I use Bosphorus cymbals, one of the oldest brands in Turkey. All handmade by three master cymbal smiths - gorgeous sound and all customised. For sticks I use Vater - leading brand worldwide and my favourite series is the sweet ride one - light and gives me a clean, crisp sound. For accessories I use RTOM (Moongel, practice pads and black-holes - which I use so much during lockdown to reduce the volume of my kit!). I got most of them through social media and I have been an endorsed artist for more than 3 years, very grateful for all of them. I will actually travel to NAMM this year provided by Bosphorus Cymbals.

You recently took part in the “Women In The Workforce” Panel for the UK Drum show. Can you tell us about that and some of the themes that were discussed?

A lot, it was such a pleasure to be part of this. For the first time in years, there was a designated space for female drummers

and it was such a success that I am sure they will repeat it next year. We covered topics like imposter syndrome, new opportunities for the new generation of female drummers, MU changes and support, challenges, how can we support each other. It was actually a very motivational and inspirational panel.

Do you feel that female drummers are still a novelty or do you feel the landscape has changed?

It depends on the scene, but there is definitely more visibility that people are getting used to seeing very good female players in different areas of the industry and it feels a bit more normalised. Still a long way to go but things are changing and more opportunities are being opened for female musicians, especially drummers.

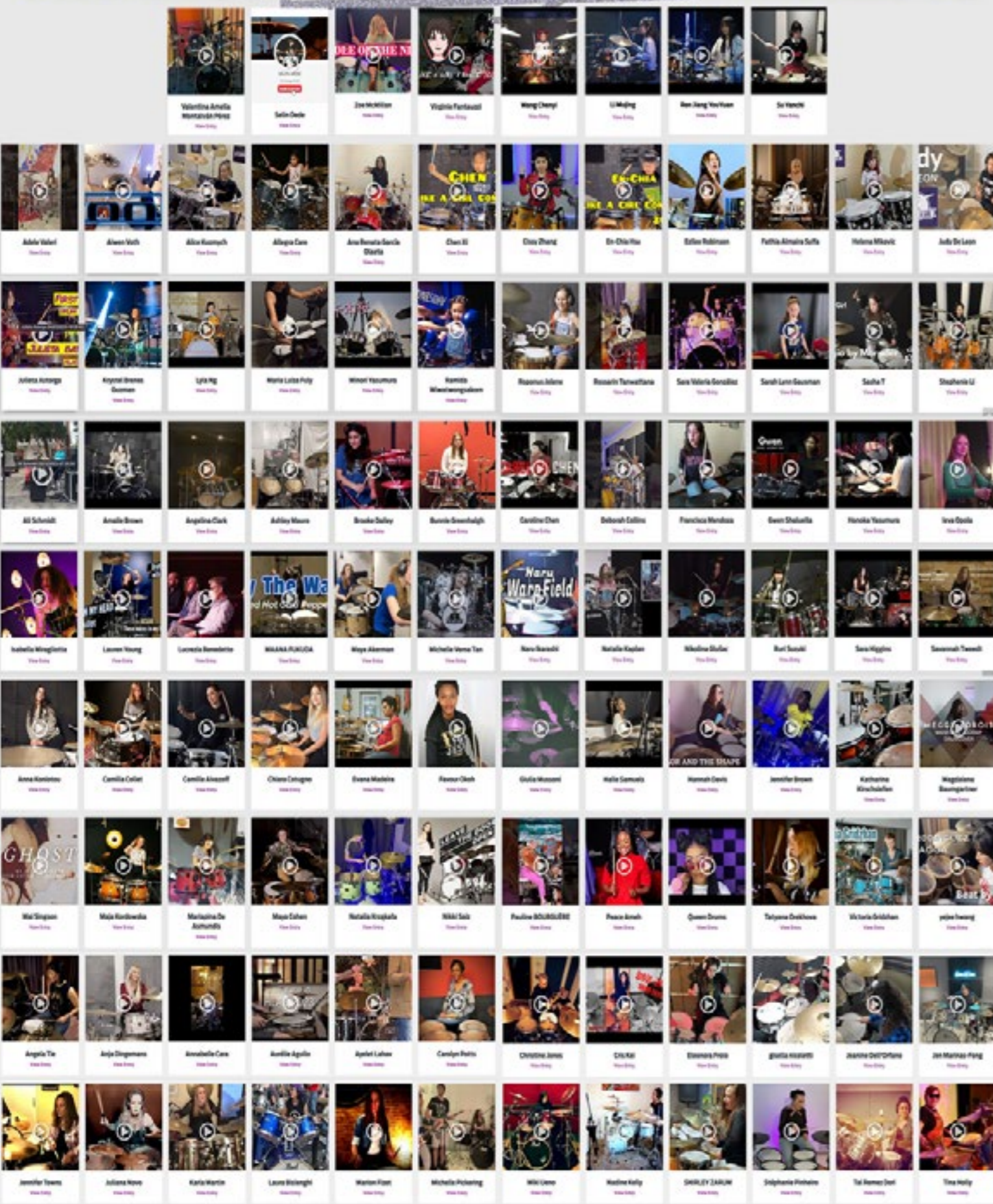
Words of wisdom for female drummers?

Keep going, keep working hard, that dream gig is coming your way and if it's not that, something better will come from the hard work and resilience!

**MIGDALIA VAN DER HOVEN
LINKS,
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congratulations to

THE 2023 HIT LIKE A GIRL FINALISTS



#RHYTHMUNITESUS



We were very proud to be one of the sponsors for the Hit Like A Girl contest this year.

A brilliant organisation, with incredible industry support including Yamaha, Zildjian, TAMA, Vic Firth and more. This year was the twelfth international contest for female drummers whose purpose is to showcase and encourage drumming and lifelong musicianship for girls, women, female-identifying and non-binary individuals, regardless of age, playing level or geographic location. The contest has had thousands of entries from many countries across the globe and has made a significant impact on the visibility of female drummers.

Women in Jazz Media team member Migdalia van Der Hoven was one of this year's judges:

"It has been a pleasure and a privilege being part of the Hit Like A Girl UK Team and being able to see all the talent out there. The entries this year were incredible and it gives hope and pride seeing that the next generation of female drummers are taking over the world through music!"

Migdalia van der Hoven

There were two categories - under 18s and over 18s - and we wanted to find out more about the winners and are very happy to shine a light on some of them here. In our last magazine, we spoke to Isobel Wood, Maya Akerman, Bunnie Greenhalgh and Abbie Finn and you can read the article by [clicking here](#) In this magazine we speak to:

Harriet Cruickshank

Can you tell us a little bit about you and how long you have been playing the drums?

Hi, I am Hattie. I am a 22-year-old 4th year chemistry student at the University of Warwick studying towards a Masters in Chemistry. I have been playing the drums for 8 years! I started out learning the clarinet at primary school and always had a passion for rhythm, but when I got to secondary school, I was able to sit behind a drum kit and play a basic beat with ease! It felt so natural. I begged my parents to buy me a drum kit and eventually they let me have lessons at school and bought me a drum kit for my 14th birthday.

How did you find out about the Hit Like A Girl competition and how important do you feel this type of platform is?

I found out about the Hit Like A Girl competition through social media and some research online about it. This platform is so important as it allows female drummers to connect from all over the world and it's great to see so many female drummers of different ages and abilities, from such a wide variety of backgrounds.

Can you tell us some of the female drummers that have inspired you?

A female drummer who has always inspired me ever since I started playing is Anika Nilles. I used to spend hours watching her on YouTube as a teen!

Let's get technical! Can you tell us about your kit and sticks of choice?

I currently play a Mapex Armory kit with a wood finish and my go to sticks are 7As! I find a smaller diameter and lighter stick much easier to play with and this size complements the jazz and funk styles I frequently play.

Can you tell us about your current projects - any gigs or recordings we should know about?

My projects are continually changing as I move around a lot due to my studies, but I am currently in a London-based Nu jazz band called Moon Dispute. We are in the process of releasing our first tracks on YouTube.

Do you have any words of wisdom for other female drummers out there?

I think it can sometimes be difficult, particularly when you're new to the instrument, to find a role model to look up to, especially as female drummers are hard to come by! However, I believe this creates an opportunity for you to stand out, so don't be afraid to be unique!

**FOR HARRIET CRUICKSHANK
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THE PHOTOGRAPHERS:

TATIANA GORILOVSKY
AT THE LONDON JAZZ FESTIVAL,
2023.



Barque Luar, the collective of vocalists and percussionists united by their love of Afro-Brazilian music. At the Clore Ballroom of Southbank Centre they presented their new album *Brilha*, 18.11.2023 by Tatiana Gorilovsky

Cherise performing for the BBC 3 radio show J to Z
at the Pizza Express Holborn,
10.11.2023
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



China Moses, Jazz Voice, Royal Festival Hall,
10.11.2023
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



Emeli Sande, Jazz Voice, Royal Festival Hall,
10.11.2023
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



Georgia Mancio during her 3 days residency with
Alan Broadbent at the Pizza Express Pheasantry,
17.11.2023
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



Hiromi playing at the Barbican Centre foyer for the
BBC 3 radio show J to Z,
12.11.2023
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



Judi Jackson, Jazz Voice, Royal Festival Hall,
10.11.2023
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



Jo Harrop at the Cadogan Hall,
performing songs from her new album
"The Heart Wants"
9.10.2023
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



Naomi Banks, Jazz Voice, Royal Festival Hall,
10.11.2023
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



Nikki Iles, pianist, composer and bandleader
presenting her work with the NDR Bigband at the
Cadigan Hall,
19.11.2023
by Tatiana Gorilovsky





BETTY ACCORSI

Foto Giordano Minora

GROWING ROOTS WITH BETTY ACCORSI'S SONIC IMAGES

BY GERMANA STELLA LA SORSA

The combination of music and images has been a powerful one for many many years.

Plenty of painters and photographers have crafted their work, galvanised by music, such as Wassily Kandinsky, who was inspired by Arnold Schoenberg's compositions while searching for a new style of painting.

Jazz was no exception, of course. Just think of Jackson Pollock's action painting technique, used to capture the freedom behind improvisation and rhythm.

In reverse, I hear more and more often of contemporary jazz artists who are inspired by images, hearing sounds just by looking at them and transposing the same images in a cinematic, musical way through their compositions.

Italian saxophonist and multi-instrumentalist Betty Accorsi is one of them. Photos, natural landscapes and images combined with a wide range of style and themes flow in Accorsi's writing, making the correlation between jazz and images a fundamental feature of her craft.

Accorsi moved from Milan to London in 2018 after she studied classical saxophone, piano and composition at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi. After having started her Master's degree in Jazz Saxophone at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, she then moved to Goldsmiths, University of London in 2019, where she completed her Master's in Performance under the guidance of Mick Foster, Paul Bartholomew and Dr Pete Furniss, graduating with distinction in 2020.

The Italian saxophonist, who now lives and teaches in Brighton, has surrounded herself with some of the finest musicians on the UK jazz scene, giving her the impetus to put together the Betty Accorsi Quartet, which was founded with pianist Finn Carter and drummer Scott MacDonald, and features bassist Andy Hamill (Van Morrison, Martin Taylor, Ibrahim Maalouf).

The quartet debuted with their "simply elegant, superbly crafted, sumptuously melodic jazz" (All about Jazz) releasing 'The Cutty Sark Suite' in December 2020 and performing the whole suite at 2021 Brighton Fringe Festival on a live-streamed gig.

Two years after 'The Cutty Sark Suite', Accorsi released her second work 'Growing Roots', funded by Help Musician's Music Of Black Origin (MOBO) Award. The line up is the same as in the first album but with pianist Daniel Hewson (Groove Armada, Madonna, Incognito) instead of Carter. The release marks an evolution in Accorsi's compositional approach that here appears even more polished and sophisticated.

Regarding her music, it has been said that "her compositions take you where she says the music belongs" (Simply Jazz Talk) and I couldn't agree more. Her tunes are a cinematic projection of some of her many passions - ranging from nature and its protection, to the curiosity of people. Most of all, these are based on



PHOTO
BY TATIANA GORILOVSKY

original tales that draw from the most disparate inspirations – for example, the theme of the forest in Shakespeare's plays.

In both her studio works, every tune spends time searching for and describing the topics in question, almost in the way that classical composition might explore and combine themes to create a musical image. As such, Accorsi's albums are collections of tunes and stories not chosen at random but linked together in a musical narrative.

Thanks to this, the listener can really see her scenarios through her compositions, experiencing a sort of synaesthesia between music and images. It's with six images – specifically six pictures taken by Accorsi herself – that 'Growing Roots' journey starts, along Brighton's coast.

Where does this passion for storytelling that connects music and images come from and how did it evolve between the making of your first album - 'The Cutty Sark Suite' – and your latest release, 'Growing Roots'?

*BA: I think that the connection between music and images comes from two aspects: one is my background as a classical musician and the study of how classical composers used landscapes seen in their journeys to write new music (think about Liszt's *Années de pèlerinage* inspired by his journeys in Switzerland and Italy); the second one is my passion for films! I love to watch films and see how the music is connected to the images. I also wrote some music for short films and audiobooks that you can find on my website (I would love to carry on with this too!). With *The Cutty Sark Suite* this idea of connecting music and images as in a film was strong, but it became stronger with *Growing Roots*. In *Growing Roots* I got inspired by six pictures I took from my favourite places in Brighton and nearby, and then I wrote a piece for each of them.*

You can really create a big connection with the audience by sharing your stories when playing your music live. How important is it for you to explain them or how often do you let the audience just interpret or guess what your music is about?

BA: I like to guide the audience in a sort of story-telling performance and sometimes they just tell me after the gig that they can see the places I described in their head and this is a very important thing for me. I want to bring the audience on a journey where they can see places and meet characters through my music.

I know that your compositions also take inspiration from different popular cultures, as well as traditional/folk music. Can you tell us more about your compositional approach and the research behind it?

BA: I love listening to English, Scottish and Irish Folk and some of my melodies can remind the listener of this style of music. When I write, I research a subject first and then the music comes. I didn't do any research on a particular kind of music but I just leave the music to enter in me and then I will adjust it into my composition.

Talking about sound and phrasing, I can definitely hear references to John Coltrane but also to the ECM style. What are your main influences? Is there anyone in particular that you looked up to during your years of musical training?

BA: I think that my style of playing is very influenced by John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter and John Surman especially because they are all soprano saxophone players. My compositions are influenced more by Weather Report, Pat Metheny and Jan Garbarek. I love the way they use harmony to support a simple melody and how they structure a piece, telling a sort of story.

What's your next step after 'Growing Roots'? Any particular milestone you're aiming for?



BA: I am now writing the pieces for my third album that will be about the relationship between art and nature. I am also applying to play at major festivals in the UK and in Europe and I am looking for a label to collaborate for my third album. Lots of ideas and projects!

BETTY ACCORSI LINKS

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PHOTO
BY TATIANA GORILOVSKY



MONIKA HERZIG

BOTH SIDES OF JONI

BY DIANA TORTI

We were thrilled to have the inspirational pianist, composer, author and professor of artistic research at the private Jam Music Lab, University of Vienna, Monika Herzig join us this year for our London Jazz Festival events. In our afternoon session, she presented her book 'The Routledge Companion To Jazz And Gender' and in the evening, joined by the mighty Alexis Cole, Monika presented her Both Side of Joni project. An incredible event.

Prior to the event, Diana Torti caught up with Monika to talk about these projects, and below is the interview as published in

DT: Can you tell us something about yourself? I know that you're German born and that you moved to the USA where you built up your career in jazz music.

MH: *I was born in the South of Germany but I left in '88, to do a one year scholarship at the University of Alabama at that time, and it turned out to be a 35 year long stay. I've got my Masters at the University of Alabama and my doctorate at Indiana University and I also taught for many years- anything you can imagine. And then of course, over the years I built my jazz career. Probably one of the largest groups is the SHE-ROES group that I started 10 years ago and we will have our 10th anniversary next*

year. It's an All-Star group mostly based out of New York and we've just recorded our fourth album this Fall with Lenny White producing. It's something I'm very proud of, especially the longevity that we have and the many, many tours we completed all over the world. The other project that I'll present for this year is Both Sides of Joni, which is an arrangement of all Joni Mitchell songs. That has kind of a bittersweet connotation because one of the first friends that I met in '91 when I moved to Indiana was Janiece Jaffe, great jazz vocalist and we became long-term friends. It was her idea and her dream to do this album and it's actually going to be the one year anniversary from when she passed away, November 23rd last year, after heart surgery. So we made this her legacy album, and Alexis Cole jumped it and we've been touring this album. So, this is going to be performance number 32 I think this year of the project, since release which was March 31.

DT: Let's talk about this album that you'll present on November the 18th. I've listened to it and I enjoyed it a lot. It is beautiful, I really loved it. Can you tell us more about it? Also, what are Both Sides of Joni?

MH: *When Janiece came, the summer of 2020, when she had the idea, we were all thinking about what to do with our lives.*

And she's said you know, I've been listening with my son last night to this album, and I took this to Paris when I was a teenager on an exchange programme when it came out. I think it was the hissing of summer lawns and I just realised when I listened back. We heard it but we didn't really listen, and we need these words right now to get us out of this slump. So that was her inspiration to do this project and that's how we started getting together, Monday nights in the barn and work on the arrangements. So, it was her you know? It was her idea, it was her legacy and the selection of the tunes and I would arrange them. It was a very important project.

DT: To arrange songs and music from a different composer and in this case a Joni Mitchell, from a musical point of view is a big challenge. What kind of approach did you use in creating, building and releasing in this project?

MH: *Yes, it's really tricky. I was actually at a conference, and I met Samara Joy's manager, and he was just talking about things you do and then he ended with the phrase: "and the last thing you want to do is arrange Joni Mitchell's music"!*

DT: Yes, that's what I mean!

MH: *I asked him, what did he mean? He said the reason is because people who love Joni Mitchell have a very specific way of how this song sounds in their mind and they want it this way and don't want you to meddle with it. But it's just putting some jazz on it. I know Joni Mitchell but I wasn't one of these like super die hard Joni Mitchell fans, that was Janiece's part. But when I took the songs that she picked, I realised: ok first of all her words and the melodies are ingredients that you can't mess with. When you've got to take the melody and you got to take the words in the way she said it. Then when you add things to it, it's got to be in a way that elevates those. You can't*

just put a 7/4 metre on it and groove on something just because you want to be fancy. But if you add an odd metre or chord it's got to be in a way that underscores something that's in the music. For example, you know Sweet Bird where she talks about the fleeting time?

DT: I love that one actually, one of my favourite of the album...

MH: *Yeah, and that was the first one that Janiece picked. The whole theme is: you can't hang onto time, time is fleeting and so that's why I came up with this 5/8 rhythm thing, but also in a way that it changes in the three measure way. So, the time gets all mingled up in the repeats and comes in different cycles and finally meets. So in that way it made sense, but if I would have just put another 5/8 pattern on it, it wouldn't have worked but with the meaning and taking the theme of time, it does. It's the same when you listen to 'River' - sentimentally thinking about floating away on that river. So you know I did something that sounded like a river.*

DT: It is nice because my impression - and I've listened to that a few times - I could hear Joni Mitchell's idea and identity. However, I could also hear the transformation into something which was different, but which included her in some way. Which is not easy, because when you do a homage to another composer and as I said another singer, especially such a famous one, the risk is just to do a copy of her. So being able to elaborate something and to add something new while including the original is a very challenging work.

MH: *We had to model a few things too, so you come up with something, but then the vocalist comes in and sings. Janiece said that doesn't work. I can't get the words in. So it was good to have that direct collaboration and we had to adapt things so they also are singable in a good way.*

DT: You told me before about your friend



PHOTO BY FIONA ROSS

Janiece. I already knew the story about that and I was quite impressed about all the happenings behind the projects. I sensed that this was a very special bond, a real deep friendship. For me, relationships with others are the most important things in the world and are the foundation of human life, from any point of view. It is just part of human nature. However, in these complex times in which individualism, isolation, and competition are present (and I am not talking just about the music industry, but everywhere), I found something rather precious in this relationship. What did this relationship mean for you, which then also developed in the professional field?

MH: *This finally answers the previous question you asked: what are "Both Sides of Joni". You know of course there is the famous song 'Both Sides Now'. But then*

Janiece and I represented two heads for this project. So that's why we hinted at Both Sides Now because of that relationship. Then also both of us are geminis, where she was born June 9, I'm June 12 and so you know we both have two heads. But it's four of us so that's the 'both sides two' - so we put that all together in that package. And you know, I knew her so well, she was one of the people I always talked to, come rain or come shine. She went through some tough times, and you know we would hang on to each other and do things. I think that relationship can be heard. And also, as weird as it was, that gift of time that we had during that year of just working on this for a year, by the time we got to the studio we had really worked on this.

DT: Thank you for sharing your personal story about this beautiful friendship with us. As a psychologist I collaborate within WiJM in the well-being team. We realised over time



that sharing experiences is so important to the women who follow our initiatives and activities. For instance, in the last few years, we've found out that many female musicians felt lonely and isolated. So, we started sharing stories related to many topics, like personal experiences, discrimination, mental issues, or stereotypes. It is very helpful for many women to know that we can share this information and that they are not alone.

MH: Oh yes, well in response to your thoughts on loneliness. And it's also a response to this whole post feminism thing where we women were kind of pitted against each other, saying those who are strong enough and powerful enough will rise to the top, and there is a place for one or two that can make it! And the problem is, all this competition! And then you have to work with your elbows to be the one rising to the top making up that spot and that's not healthy. So, the healthy way is what you guys do with WiJM organisation, saying we're providing a community and we're supporting each other and lifting each other up.

DT: Thank you for saying that! That is the power of a community. It is just doing what you wish to do and it is something that should be allowed to everybody, not just a few - it is just realising your identity and expressing yourself!

I would like to go back to the 18th of November. In addition to the concert, there will be in the afternoon, the presentation of the book *The Routledge Companion to Jazz and Gender* to which you collaborated with a contribution. You are currently professor of artistic research at the JAM MUSIC LAB Private University of Vienna for Jazz and Popular Music and many of your activities and initiatives in both artistic and educational roles are focused on promoting equality for women in the jazz industry. Can you tell us more about this book and what it represents?

MH: This is actually a volume of 38 chapters. We had contributions from four continents and I'm one of the three co-editors who put the project together with James

Reddan and Michael Kahr. It looks at everything from history, from social and cultural perspectives and then also on advocacy: where should we go and what are some of the barriers. It's just a really good collection of all the aspects and it's 'jazz and gender' so it looks at gender you know from all perspectives. It's not just about women, it's also the queer community. Jennifer Leitham, who is a transgender bassist, tells her story and some others are in there. The thing is, it's a really expensive book so it's something for the libraries. Hopefully in a few months there will be a paperback edition and an e-book is also possible. But what I'll do is share all the different aspects and barriers and I can kind of show where we are and what things we still need to overcome. So, it's this vicious cycle, you know, starting from the bottom, when you pick instruments, and the trumpets and trombones are for the boys and the girls get the flutes and the violins. And then when you get into puberty in school, and they introduce improvisation, the girls go into hiding because they don't do that when they're in puberty and they could look foolish in front of their peers. So, it's this cycle, and hopefully at the presentation, a really great outcome is to have everybody think about a way where they can cut into this cycle to turn it towards a different pathway. So, to cut that cyclic thing.

DT: Great, I also read an interesting article you wrote 'Equal access: Women in jazz come together'. I was curious about a few things about it. I quote the first one: "Research has made it clear by now that it's not biological factors but social and psychological factors that influence female participation in jazz"- and is so true. However, was this confirmation by research necessary? I agree with you, this is just a provocation, but why do we need to confirm this gender equality? Should it not be granted for everyone regardless of the nature of any diversity? From my point of view the identity that I recognise is the human identity. Then if you are a female or a male, black or white, tall or short and so on, it shouldn't be relevant really?





MH: Well, there were a bunch of really deep myths about the playing aspect. For example, brass instruments for a long time had deep myths not only for women but in general: you had to have big lips and you had to have enough power. So one part of all these myths with being female, is that you don't have enough muscle power. Same thing for drumming. You had these articles on *Downbeat* in the 50s where they say, "oh you can't do this!" And you know, even for me in 2016, I was at a club and I gave the club owner my CD of all females and he said: "you know that it couldn't happen in Vienna, because I've been told that the girls in puberty between 10 and 15, they don't have enough muscle and energy to practise at that level!" Myths are really deep and lingering! So having some studies to say no, we could not find anything there that's really important. It finally busts the myths because it's so deep, and you can't just get off by saying no, you're wrong, you have to tell. You have to provide some evidence that you know this is just a myth.

DT: Thank you for that Monika. Second quote is: "We need education that reaches all of our women and all of our students - and all of our men too". What do you think men must do? I mean what's the role of men in all of this?

MH: Well, for men it is actually realising some of the ways of interacting and realising that being passive and doing nothing is also a problem. Saying I'm not part of the problem, so what should I do? That part in terms of educational strategies, it just means the way you teach, especially improvisation. You have to be conscious about creating exercises, strategies where you always have everybody included and not just the star students, nor volunteers. Because there are proven psychological issues, which as a psychologist I'm sure you can realise, that at a certain age there's just behavioural things that if you don't encourage participation, you're going to lose them. And then you've lost that of course it's a matter of practising to get better. And if you start hiding and you just are not

doing it, while others are volunteering, then the difference increases. So by the time you get to high school or to an age where you are thinking about getting serious, you know you're already so far behind, you're saying, well I'm just not good enough.

DT: In this article you talk about the need for a "safe space to create, experiment and express". I'm quite fascinated about this and I link it to your project SHEROES, that you mentioned before. How to reach this safe space in the jazz world, which is still oriented by stereotypes and male dominated?

MH: I mean on the educational side we've been doing a lot of these jazz girls days, right? Workshop days where you have girls 10 to 18 together and then people ask, why do you need to make a special day for all girls? Can't you just go into schools and teach? Again, I love studies because studies are good. But there's actually several that also look at the interactions in bands and you have mixed bands or groups or creative units. You always find that the dynamics don't work out and that eventually the males will take over and the females will take either the role of just doing what's needed or disappearing from a group. So, it is an issue with those dynamics. What can you do with an all girls environment, especially like the jazz girls day? You take all these social factors away so they can just experiment and be themselves. You know in the feedback I get every time, is that this confidence push - yes I can do it and you know I can experiment and feel free to make mistakes. It is one of the most important aspects. I have surveys every time afterwards, asking what was the most important thing? a) playing with peers and b) this ability to experiment and build my confidence that I can do this. So that's why these environments are important: to the safe spaces where you take these social factors that interfere, away. In terms of bands, I love my SHEROES and I think one of the most important aspects of that band is just to change the stereotyping on stage. When you see this band enter a stage, you change the picture of how people imagine a jazz band should look like. I love that we get

more and more involvement and changes. But in most of the bands I see of my peers even now, is that you have the female leader and it's still an all-male band. I think that's still an issue. We must be a bit more conscious of how these bands look on stage because otherwise it will never change this stereotyping effect.

DT: I agree with you, and thanks for talking about the pressures which is a big issue for professionals, as well as for the new generations. What are the challenges that professional female musicians face today? What has changed in the last few years (or decades maybe)? And what remains to be done to get to a safe space for women in jazz?

MH: We see a lot of positive changes. Obviously just having the topic more in front of our consciousness opens up a lot of doors. But a lot of the issues with those barriers is that they are so deeply rooted that it won't change from one day to the next, just like the stereotyping effect that I was talking about. These expectations that we unconsciously have of how a typical jazz band looks like, you know, that's something that will take a while to change. And it is something that needs that conscious effort of saying, well I just have to change that picture on the stage. It's also a lot of hiring. If you look at full-time instrumental jazz faculties that's probably the saddest picture of the whole. I think there's one female professor in Germany and maybe one or two in Austria, female instrumental professors. So that's ok if you have a position and if you're hiring the first batch of applications that will come in, automatically they will probably look the same. But you have to actually reach out and ask somebody in a different network, ask a female colleague to say, please can you encourage your friends to apply? And then you might have to make the effort a few times of saying: ok I have a few equal applicants, I'll just go for the sake of diversity and hire female until we reach that equilibrium. So right now we have a lot of good intentions, we have a lot of attention but it needs a few really directed action items to get that change.

MONIKA HERZIG LINKS CLICK HERE

The following photos by Nolan Regent and Fiona Ross were taken during Monika's performance at our London Jazz Festival event at Toulouse Lautrec, London with Alexis Cole (vocals) Gina Schwartz (bass) and of course Monika Herzig on keys:



DT: Yes, and that is a slow process. I know that you know both American and Austrian realities and environments. Do you think that there's any difference related to that?

MH: *I think the sad pictures are the same sad picture everywhere. Austria is a very conservative country in a lot of ways. I imagine that the change is a little harder, because to get something moving takes a lot more effort and time. In the States you can still, you know, if you're like Terri Lyne Carrington and you have this idea and you start this centre for jazz and gender justice and you put the book out, you just do it and it works. And I started similar initiatives here. I want to put a book together for Europe eventually. So, it's a slower process but we're pushing!*

DT: Thanks, and my last question is what are your plans for the future?

MH: *One thing hopefully is the 101 Lead Sheets for European women composers eventually, then actually working with an Italian organisation MIDJ on it too. And the 10th anniversary of the SHEROES will be next year and will be releasing our fourth album, a big European Tour in October for sure. We'll have to come back next year and bring the SHEROES. And we're also looking at this stereotyping and these effects: I'm going to put my research skills to that, to really find out how deep it is.*

DT: Great Monika, thank you so much for this chat. We look forward to seeing and listening to you soon in London!

MH: *Thanks!*



PHOTOS BY FIONA ROSS

KICKING DOWN THE DOOR



ASHAINE WHITE BY FIONA ROSS



THE KICKING DOWN THE DOOR CREATOR FUND: SHOWCASING ALTERNATIVE BLACK TALENT

BY ISABEL MARQUEZ

Earlier this year, Women in Jazz Media along with team member Ashaine White launched the 'Kicking Down the Door Creator Fund', to support the development of Black female musicians in the early stages of their careers. The fund focuses on encouraging those musicians who have an eye for genre experimentation and alternative music styles. Its key aims are:

- To break down assumptions and stereotypes within the music industry by encouraging role models for future generations of female Black Alternative artists.
- To raise awareness of the female Black artists creating genre-bending and exceptional new music
- To increase the profile of female Black Alternative Music
- To encourage authentic music creation outside of industry stereotyping and assumptions

Three outstanding musicians were chosen in this round of applications: Mary Sho, Olympia Vitalis and Rybes. Along with funding towards new music and recording equipment, Women in Jazz Media sought to platform the striking talent of these artists at the London Jazz Festival in November 2023. Two of the recipients took part in the showcase, an exceptionally special performance. Mary Sho and Olympia Vitalis took to the stage to share their exciting creations with the room, along with a memorable performance from Ashaine White herself.

What led you to come up with the idea of the Kicking Down the Door Creator Fund?

Ashaine White: Funding is really hard to get for independent artists, especially in my experience as an artist who does not stick to a specific genre; someone who prides themselves on being cross-genre and eclectic. I thought it was really cool when the opportunity arose through Women in Jazz Media and Tony Barnes, to be able to give back to artists like me, who require that critical bit of funding and support to help them put out their music independently. I wanted to help these artists figure out who they are and make their own music, authentically. I particularly wanted to support Black female artists who make music that is boundary-breaking and trying something completely new and exciting. That's what the music industry needs, and often isn't what the music industry rewards. After COVID-19 and TikTok, a lot of artists are starting to use a formula for making music that would fit into TikTok culture and trends, making music people already know, rather than trying to challenge that.

Could you tell us a little bit more about your music style and approach? Have you felt restricted by genre categorization, particularly as a Black artist?

A.W: Genre categorization has never stopped me from making music and creating authentic music. That is not something



I'm thinking about when I'm making music. It's a cathartic exercise, where you can sit and exist completely as yourself, especially if you are not taking on too much of what the outside world is doing or saying. When I'm writing songs I try not to listen to other people's music; I just exist as myself. Restriction comes in more in the aftermath of making music and trying to release music to reach people, within the existing industry structures such as playlisting and press support, which specifically use genre in their marketing. This is useful for some people, especially if you make music that is part of a certain genre, but for me, that structuring doesn't work. I am a Black artist, a Black singer-songwriter, and a Black female in the public eye, and in many people's experiences of Black musicians in the past, it hasn't looked or sounded like me. That has been the barrier that I have had to overcome, making sure I am staying in my own lane and doing what I enjoy out of music. I don't want to make music that fits other people's expectations, and I don't want to be what they need in order to sell me.

If you can write music that you like and can see yourself in, from when you wrote it at 18 to singing it on stage at 25, to listening back and showing your kids when you're 85, that's what is important. Music that sounds like me, feels like me, grows with me and does not rely on an external voice.

What would you like to see done differently in the music industry?

A.W: Turning the focus back onto art, taking time to create music and championing artists who are trying to do something different. There is a space for the pop stars of the world and those making strictly commercial music, and that's amazing too as long as it is authentic to you. Also, live performance- I think people should perform live more and go out and see the world, allowing people to display their art and their craft.

Can you tell us a bit about your upcoming releases/ musical projects/ general career ideas?

A.W: In the new year, I'm hopefully going to release a new EP. The music is done and it is so exciting, so I'm looking to speed things up with that. Loads of gigs, I'm always performing, so come see me at a show! I'd like to do some overseas gigs as well. Just trying to keep making authentic music and building a sound that feels like me.

I managed to ask the performers a few questions about their time at the festival, as well as their general experience of being awarded this career-altering fund.

How did it feel to be chosen for this fund?

Mary Sho: I feel seen, I feel heard being a black alternative artist. I often feel left out because you're not making music that fits into the category that is stereotypically expected of you as a black female artist and I've applied for funding before and haven't been successful. So, this felt great and boosted my confidence to keep on going and keep on applying for funding.

Olympia Vitalis: It was definitely a surprise and a lovely one! Most people probably don't realise but musicians are always on the lookout for new funds and opportunities that can help their careers. I am constantly applying for funds, and always getting rejected, so this was just such a lovely surprise. It's such a special fund so it just felt even better to even be considered. At the stage that I'm at, just having support and recognition from an organisation means the world. It's a challenge to stay confident and this industry isn't easy, so being acknowledged by Women in Jazz Media was something I really needed.

Why did you choose to apply for this fund in particular?

M.S: It was the mantra that did it for me. It was the reason why Women in Jazz Media wanted to support black female artists that make alternative music 'created to support the development of exceptional female Black artists in the early stages of their careers. The project aims to champion the creation of genre-bending and alternative original music.' As soon as I read that, I was like, I have to apply for this.

O.V: I have been following Women in Jazz Media for a while through Ashaine White, so it's been on my radar since she started getting involved. It felt like a great fit for me and where I'm at right now as an artist, so I thought I'd give it a shot.

How would you define your musical style and approach?

M.S: I grew up listening to so many genres from funk to soul to hip hop to jazz to classical music, including film scores. So, when I make music, I don't say I'm going to make a hip-hop track or a jazz track or R&B track. I just want to make music that feels good and empowers me and the listener, and I draw in from all of these influences. That's why some of my tracks can sound like they have 3 genres in one or it starts off funk and then transitions into becoming soul. One thing I will say is, all my tracks are soul, and hence why I coin my music alternative soul.

O.V: I would say I'm a soul singer. Soul music is so rich both musically and lyrically and I'm trying to marry important, strong messages with rich melodies and harmonies. I feel passionate about writing on more salient issues, and discussing topics that are maybe slightly less touched upon in music. I've always listened to the strong, black voices, discussing resistance and socio-political issues of their times, and so I'm trying to do that in my own way now.

Of course, maybe sometimes I'll touch on relationships and love, but I'm more inter-

ested in reflecting our times through my music. I think it's really important to do this and I believe I have a responsibility to do so.

I was in a gospel choir for 7 years so that definitely comes through in my singing style, I love improvisation and scatting and I try to incorporate those styles in my music as well. I also try not to box myself into one genre and just create as freely as I can.

Do you feel like there are boundaries in place for Black artists in the industry? What would you like to see done differently?

M.S: I feel that there are definitely boundaries in place for black artists in the UK more than in America or Africa. I feel the UK puts limitations on the type of music black artists can make and we tend to champion certain genres at a given time, but more recently they rotate between afro-pop, trap and drill or R&B. I don't have an issue with any of these genres. In fact, I listen to some of the genres, and good music is good music, but I don't see the UK music industry pushing artists that make music outside of the genres or alternative black artists in comparison to America where you can have Steve Lacey's Gemini album go number one or Solange's album A Seat at the Table go number one.

O.V: I think where I've seen the most obvious boundary is the lazy categorisation of black artists into one big group. I feel strongly about Soul music having its own space to shine and not just being lumped in with R&B. I think a lot of the time people see a black artist and push them into the 'black' genres, in my case a soul singer being labelled an RnB singer. I think to remedy this, musicians need to be vocal about how they define themselves. I'm intent on making the distinction clear so that I can be given the space to create freely as well as soul music being given the standalone platform that it so rightly

deserves.

Can you tell us a bit about your upcoming releases/ musical projects/ general career ideas?

M.S: So, I just released my debut album called Woman Rising which I'm so proud of. It's finally out in the world on all good platforms available to buy and stream. I have also been working on a fully self-produced EP and I started making this during the pandemic. I'm now taking this project into the studio and working with musicians to enhance it and expand the tracks, so that should be coming out mid-next year. Next year I definitely want to be on festival stages and continue to make visuals.

O.V: 2024 is going to be a busy one for me! My next few releases are all very different and my next release is planned for early February. I'm still so early in my career so the best thing for me as an artist is to release songs in quick succession so that I can start to build an audience. I'm also in the middle of a lot of content creation for my next few releases, which I'm really excited for people to see! I'm just really hoping to maintain momentum, both in my music creation and also my releases.

What was it like to perform at the London Jazz Festival?

M.S: It was brilliant. I really enjoyed the atmosphere. One of my friends who came to watch said it reminded them of being in New York. It was an absolute honour and it only sunk in when the show was over, that I was part of the London Jazz Festival. I'm so grateful to Women in Jazz Media for seeing me, for hearing my music and for being chosen. It definitely opened up some doors physically and mentally and has helped me to want to keep on going, keep on pushing my music out there and find people who want to hear it.

O.V: It was so lovely to be involved in the London Jazz Festival. More often than not people speak over our sets and don't listen

listen to our music, so to have a listening audience was so special. I love singing to jazz crowds because they genuinely care and want to listen, and I felt the love. Big thank you again to the team for getting me involved. It's a night I'll remember for a long time.

We are so excited to keep following these outstanding ladies on their musical journeys!

Keep updated about everything 'Kicking Down the Door Creator Fund' here:

[ASHAINE WHITE LINKS](#)

[MARY SHO LINKS](#)

[OLYMPIA VITALIS LINKS](#)



GERMANA STELLA LA SORSA



PHOTO BY TATIANA GORILOVSKY

GERMANA STELLA LA SORSA: PRIMARY COLOURS

Singer and Storyteller Germana Stella La Sorsa and Women in Jazz Media team member, is releasing her new album Primary Colours on January 26th 2024. Supported by Help Musicians, released by 33 Jazz Records and distributed by The Orchard, the album also features special guest Australian harpist Tara Minton. This is Germana's second release, after her debut album Vapour in 2021 and the album contains 7 original compositions reflecting her musical influences - such as Gretchen Parlato, Bobby McFerrin and Jeff Buckley - and drawing upon her eclectic background and skilful voice, as well as the band's versatility, to create something fresh, new and unexpected. The music explores drum'n'bass grooves, latin influences and free improvisation and having released three singles from the album already, anticipation for the full album is high.

Your upcoming release Primary Colours is described as a concept album that 'draws parallels between the art of colour and musical narration.' Can you talk us through this concept?

GSLs: While writing the music for Primary Colours, I knew that I wanted to share something more deep and intimate than my first album Vapour so I decided to write about things the listener can relate to. I've always been quite an impulsive person and in some situations this has led me to make bad decisions. Don't get me wrong, I genuinely believe that everything happens for a reason and makes us who we are, becoming part of our personal story. But at the same time, I think that it's very important to listen to our feelings so that we don't

let other people or situations put us down, staying truthful to ourselves. To reach this awareness, I had to work hard to actually observe, understand and - most importantly - accept my emotions and feelings. I don't believe in "negative" and "positive" emotions. To me, every human feeling "completes" another one; life experiences are nothing but a mixture of these feelings that combine and interact with each other, leading to life changes, like primary colours and shades combining together, creating new tones. From here, the simple idea came - not that new...but I just got very excited about doing it myself! - To associate every emotion with a colour and every colour with a musical story.

You have released 3 singles from the album with the first one 'Black' exploring your struggles with depression. This track explores the isolation and loneliness of depression in quite a light-hearted way. Did you find the creation of this track helped you understand your emotions more? And for anyone out there who also struggles with depression, how do you hope they connect with this track?

GSLs: I'd say that it was more the opposite as it was understanding and accepting loneliness and dismay that helped me write the tune. To be completely honest, in the first place - as it happened for most of the tunes written in Vapour - the tune initially "came to me". One day, I started to hear a new melody while walking to the train station. The weather was really miserable, cold and on the edge of raining (...not really ideal for a Southern Italian person). Whilst walking and listening to

GERMANA STELLA LA SORSA | PRIMARY COLOURS



fragments of the tune in my head, some old, dark memories popped into my mind. At that moment I realised that, in a past in which I was almost constantly feeling bad about myself and my life, weather like that would have made me feel even worse. That day, walking to the station in that horrible weather, the tune was cheerful and I was feeling good remembering the day in which I decided to accept the "bad" feelings, to look very closely at them and to accept them; to face the "downs" to ultimately reach the "ups". Thanks to a past in which I would have been "happy to disappear", I was fully living my present and feeling alive, being able to smile in the rain and to write new music. I hope that everyone that listens to the track can relate to the lyrics of the intro and will feel hit by the development of the tune and its real message to find some strength in it.

Depression is a beast and it's fundamental to seek help. This help can be the key to understanding ourselves, what we are dealing with and where our inner strength is. Mine was realising that there's no light if there's no dark...we need to find ourselves in a "black" room sometimes to remember that there's still light out there, that we want that light and that we can look for it. And even if sometimes we find ourselves in the dark again, we can remember that time in which we changed things..and a "sad" song becomes a tune of joy and pride.

Your second single 'Blue' has the fantastic Tara Minton on harp and you have said that 'From our first encounter it was clear that we were artistically and humanly on the same page'. How did you first connect with Tara and what was it like to work with her on this track?

GSLs: Tara Minton is a wonderful blessing in the universe and I'm extremely proud to have her on a track that is so important to me. We were briefly introduced by a common friend and, the next thing I knew was that she was at the Vapour album launch and I was so flattered to see her there and for how complementary she was. I don't remember precisely how but we ended up talking about missing home as we both come from outside the UK and both from seaside towns. From that conversation, we stayed in touch, supporting each other's music and eventually starting to work together, sharing the stage on some gigs. I already knew her latest release - at the time - 'Please Do Not Ignore The Mermaid', so I was over the moon when she asked me to sing backing vocals for her at Ronnie Scott's. It was whilst prepping for the gig, listening to the music on her album over and over again, that I really got Tara's connection with the sea and understood that it was as strong as mine. So, when I wrote Blue, I could see her "painting" with her harp all the shades of blue that I needed.

The track was actually written by me with a huge contribution from an old friend and colleague

from University, guitarist Francesco Bellanova. After having sent Tara the music and a recording from a rehearsal with the band, we met one day to play it together. I knew that I wanted to hear the waves through her playing and to see all those shades of blue...and I knew that I only had to say to her "be you and play what you feel". I knew that the result would have been magical and I couldn't be happier with it!

This track is also sung in your mother tongue, Italian. When you were creating this track, how did your homeland present itself musically?

GSLs: You know, a lot of bad things are said about Italy.. there's no work, it's a politically corrupt country and the Mafia rules. Of my hometown Taranto, people say even worse things as it's also not a "well managed" place: the economy could rely on tourism but no one does anything to realise this as it's home to an infamous steel company, Italy's largest steel producer and one of the largest in Europe. Those things are all true, I can't deny them - but also, we have a saying in Italian: "the whole world is a country"! Since I've left Italy, there hasn't been one day that I haven't missed my Puglia. As I said, Taranto is a seaside town so some of my best memories are related to the sea and set at the beach, in the warm weather, with the sun shining, most of the time with my family. Blue is about the joy that comes from - and with - these memories and that sense of belonging. It's the sea that speaks to me, reminding me that I'll always belong to my home and that, no matter what, I can always go back there. And that's what I wanted to feel while playing Blue, so that I can always find the warmth and the comfort of home, the place where I can always be myself.

The single also speaks of motherhood, safety and home and you are now a mother! How do you hope your son will feel after listening to this track? Once he has grown up a little of course!

GSLs: I actually found out that I was pregnant not too long after I wrote the tune but I immediately felt that it could have easily been a lullaby for my son. The whole album has been finalised (including the photoshoot for the album art) and recorded while I was pregnant so he has already listened to it! He was already in the music; he's part of this album so I really hope that once he is old enough to understand the essence of the lyrics of Blue, he will know that he'll always find in me that safe haven I find in my hometown.





The album features your long-time collaborators Sam Leak on Hammond Organ and Jay Davis on drums, with the addition of guitarist Tom Ollendorff. How did the musical relationships with these musicians develop and what was it like to work with them on this album?

GSL: I met Sam and Jay the second or the third evening after I moved to London at a jam session at Oliver's Jazz Bar in Greenwich...imagine doing your first jam session in a new city with extraordinary musicians like them...I felt extremely lucky! I still feel blessed every time I play with them and for having them on board since my first album.

Before I started to write my own music, I was mainly gigging around London with The Jazz in Cinema Project, a tribute to jazz written for movies or that appeared in films, founded with double bass player Joe Boyle. We started as a duo but soon extended to special guests and Sam has been one of our features many times so it's been quite a while that we've played together. When I started to write the music for Vapour, he was immediately supportive, helping me with some of the arrangements but also guiding me through the practical aspects of a release - from getting in touch with a label to planning a proper tour. I owe Sam a lot of what I've learned during these years.

Sam and Jay have often played together so I've always been mesmerised by their interplay; besides this and the fact that I totally love Jay's playing. It wasn't too difficult to think about him when I was looking for someone to record my originals.

Despite not having been properly introduced, I already knew Tom and had listened to his music live so I started to follow him on Instagram, where I discovered that - while I was releasing Vapour - he also was releasing his album A Song for You. I immediately loved his music and his playing and - since our albums basically came out together - I felt connected to him in a way and started to support him. At the time I had some gigs in the calendar for the promotion of Vapour and I was looking for a guitarist so I thought about him. I was extremely happy when he agreed to play with me and even happier to start to recording



together. Before Primary Colours, we filmed a duo version of one of my originals - In Time and (S)Pace; we worked on the arrangement on the day, while the videographer was setting up his equipment, and I will always remember the dedication and the attention that Tom put to this.

Since we all started playing together, I think that the band has become more and more solid. We've reached a beautiful interplay and I feel a great respect from each of them. I've always wanted to listen to their opinions, discussing my tunes and arrangements with them, and they've always been happy to bring their contribution with passion and honesty - not to mention the fact that they are amazing human beings! I always say that each of them has a sort of "superpower": Sam can read my mind, anticipating what I'm going to sing; Jay can understand from a tiny fragment of a sang rhythm what I want him to play and Tom's playing just makes me cry for the beauty of it. I'm lucky...I really am!

Thinking about your previous album Vapour compared to this new one, how do you

feel you have developed as a composer and storyteller?

GSLs: When I've talked to the audience and in previous interviews about Vapour, I've always mentioned the fact that "the music came to me". I just started to "hear musical things", listening to some ideas to then write them on paper. Most of the music for Primary Colours instead starts from a 'non musical' concept - the feelings associated with a story. In this case, I decided to sit at the piano in order to look for sounds and harmonies through which to better tell those stories and express those emotions. I worked in a more traditional way on some of the arrangements, looking for specific chord progressions. This helped me grow as a composer since I had to fill some gaps in my musical knowledge in order to better understand how to achieve specific results.

As a storyteller, connecting colours to emotions and bringing these into stories has nourished my creativity..I have loved every moment of the creation of this album. I feel that with Vapour I've "introduced myself", my musical tastes, my background,

my way of approaching creativity; with Primary Colours I definitely wanted to highlight my abilities as a musician and composer-songwriter, using music as a channel through which to express my feelings.

And finally, performance plans - where can we see you play?

GSLs: Definitely save the date for Primary Colours album launch on the 26th of January 2024 at The Vortex Jazz Club! In the lead up to giving birth, I knew that I would have needed a small break from performing afterwards so I'm not gigging for a few months. I'll definitely be back on stage with my new music next Spring so keep an eye on my website!

ARTWORK BY ANDY PORTER

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REGIONAL GIGGING ON A BUDGET

BY ESTHER BENNETT

Prior to my annual trip to Andalusia (which is very well documented on my social media pages if you're interested!) and upon my return, I started to book my 2024 gig diary.

The general plan was: to continue what I had started prior to lockdown, tried to sustain through the course of the pandemic and hopefully fulfil once everything had finally opened up for good. That is, to create gigs and mini tours in the regional areas of England and outside of London. I had spent a considerable amount of time prior to the pandemic, sourcing and fixing gigs in the West Country for myself and fellow WIJM member Hannah Horton for a project called "Two Women in Jazz". The only gig I had fixed that we managed to do, before the pandemic closed everything down, was at Fougou Jazz in Torbay. Once everything was open, we finally got to do Ashburton Arts and The Speakeasy Por-tishead and in between, during a period where the world ping ponged between opening and closing, we did The Blue Vanguard in Topsham. All of these gigs were with the brilliant West Country resident, pianist Craig Milverton and his trio. During this whole period, gigs were re-scheduled, rescheduled again and (in some cases) finally cancelled, but I'd made some great and invaluable contacts along the way.

In 2022 and in line with my recording "Home is Where the Art is" and its first track "My Birmingham", I organised 2 mini tours in the Midlands booking only local musicians, including WIJM team member Wendy Kirkland. These took

me to Leamington Spa with the great six string bassist, Wayne Matthews, at his resident jazz session at The Bedford St. Bar, to Coventry at the Fargo Jazz night led by two great young jazz players, drummer Aaron Maloney and pianist Keenan Ngo. To Kidderminster Jazz, run by jazz singer Annette Gregory. To Tamworth Jazz at Bolehall Manor, a longstanding grass roots jazz night run by Peter Mann. To the well renowned and award-winning Peggy's Skylight in Nottingham and to Chesterfield Jazz run by Wendy Kirkland and her partner, bass player and guitarist Pat Sprakes.

Apart from the great gigs I did with these top-class musicians, I also learnt during these periods that gigs or mini tours in regional areas outside of London (where I am based) can be achieved on a budget and without funding. So, with 10 regional gigs in the book for 2024 and more to be confirmed, I am looking forward to revisiting both of these regions again, as well as a trip to the North East of England.



The main thing to take into account when gigging is that there are a wealth of brilliant and well renowned jazz musicians across the country and that not all of them reside in London! This is something I discovered a while back when taking The Duncan Lamont Songbook project to Wakefield Jazz where co-singer, the Yorkshire based jazz singer Beverley Beirne, Caroline Boaden who as well as being a brilliant drummer, is a senior lecturer at Leeds Conservatoire.

It may be that you are featuring a new album or particular project that you have recorded and gigged with your regular trio or quartet. But, in my experience, I have found that with enough information up-front, including sending sound or YouTube links and clear charts and a well-planned rehearsal prior to the gig, there are or have been no problems with new material and these gigs have been an exciting and wonderful experience. Remember, you are working with musicians who are at the top of their game and who are pleased and enthusiastic to be playing new material as well as favoured and beautiful jazz standards.

The second thing to take into account is that you are booking local musicians (and in line with the 'no funding' aspect of this piece) you are, of course, cutting costs

massively because the travel and accommodation you would have to provide for if you were bringing musicians from London is taken out of the equation.

My next budget tip is to 'keep it small'. (Hence referring to more than one or two gigs per trip as a 'mini tour'). By keeping it small I mean both gigs and area wise. I really don't think it is financially viable to do more than 4 gigs per trip. We have to take into account our personal travel and accommodation costs and a full week of accommodation and travel expenses is not sustainable. Keeping the number of gigs 'out of town' to a minimum also means that potentially, you are still available for work in your hometown for the rest of that week.

Area wise, think in terms of a small region or a journey back towards home. Working in this way will keep the travel costs down. For example, rather than Scarborough, Leeds, Newcastle think, Scarborough, Doncaster, Newcastle. If you've done 2 or 3 gigs in the West Country, think Bournemouth, Southampton or Brighton on the way back to London. Look at somewhere on the map between dates and places that you have booked, google 'jazz' in that town and you are more than likely to find jazz clubs or nights. Once you have three quartet nights booked in, you can afford to do a filler gig at a smaller venue. Base the mini tour around the gigs at the named jazz clubs or nights and the fourth could be a duo at a bar, restaurant, jam session or student jazz night. Ask the musicians you are working with if they have any regular small gigs you can do or know of any jazz sessions that you can guest host.

Regarding accommodation, in the cases where the venue does not provide it: it may be and has been for me in some cases, that band members put you up, which of course is lovely. Also consider that, if you have friends or family in the area, this could be a good time for a visit, catch up



the set list, making business or other calls, advertising on social media, writing out charts and any number of things that you could not possibly do if you were driving. Though you are travelling for work, remember that you may be visiting parts of the country that you have never been to before and may never visit again.

Why not make a mini break of it and enjoy the whole trip?

Here are my regional gigs in 2024 so far :

[FEBRUARY 8th : CANALETTO JAZZ NIGHT - KINGSMEAD](#)

[MARCH 5th : ST IVES JAZZ CLUB](#)

[MARCH 7th : FOUYOU JAZZ - TORBAY](#)

[MARCH 12th : CORNER POCKET JAZZ & BLUES CLUB - COVENTRY](#)

[MARCH 13th : BEDFORD ST JAZZ - LEAMINGTON SPA](#)

[MARCH 16th : THE JAZZ CENTRE UK - SOUTHEND](#)

[APRIL 19th : THE SPEAKEASY PORTISHEAD](#)

[MAY 8th : SCARBOROUGH JAZZ AT THE CASK](#)

[MAY 12th : THE GLOBE NEWCASTLE](#)

[MAY 19th : WATFORD JAZZ STEPS VOCAL STAGE](#)



and stay, in exchange of course, for a couple of free tickets to the gig! If you do have to find other accommodation, book early and as soon as you have secured each gig. Your mini tour is bound to be a good, few months away and booking early is way cheaper.

I generally use booking.com

In terms of travel expenses; have you considered not driving...

I'm gearing this piece towards singers but, it could also apply to horn players and even guitarists with portable amps, that is, artists who are not having to transport loads of gear and therefore, do not rely totally on travelling by car. The benefits of taking the train or coach are great, first and foremost because the cost of petrol will prove to be more expensive than taking the train or coach (and be assured, coaches are incredibly comfortable these days).

Again, booking early and once each gig is secured, can mean that tickets (I use trainline.com and National Express) can be ridiculously cheap. Once in the region of each mini tour, local trains and buses can transport you from town to town. The other benefits of not driving are of; taking in the scenery and enjoying the journey, having a snooze, something to eat or drink, planning



ANITA WARDELL



PHOTO BY KAREN KENT PHOTOGRAPHY

DIANA TORTI IN CONVERSATION WITH ANITA WARDELL

PHOTO BY KAREN KENT PHOTOGRAPHY

I recently had the opportunity to hear the amazing, well-known singer Anita Wardell live. In addition to her extraordinary artistic qualities, Anita is a sensitive, passionate and generous woman. We met for this enjoyable interview where she told us a little about herself and her latest projects, and we addressed some themes dear to us at Women in Jazz Media. Enjoy reading!

DT: Who is Anita Wardell? Tell us something about yourself.

AW: I'm mostly a very happy individual, with a very positive outlook. Like everybody else, things can get me down at times especially when life gets hard. However, I'm getting better at dealing with the hard times as I'm getting older. I continue to find ways to stay motivated, to stay young at heart, to stay fresh and come up with good ideas to help me move forward. I'm grateful for the people in my life, I love my family, whom I'm very close to.

It's important for me to collaborate with other people on projects and share ideas about this incredibly inspiring art form which I'm as passionate about today, as I always have been. I can remember the time I first heard Charlie Parker and how excited I was about his music. I couldn't wait to start my jazz journey and discovered the wonderful and inspiring artists that I still learn from to this day.

DT: When did it happen?

AW: I was born in the UK and when I was 11 my family moved to Australia. I went to this kind of progressive school. I had never seen a school like this until I got to Australia. It was an open space school. The class-

rooms were interconnected with concertina doors and you could hear what was going on in adjacent areas. It was just amazing and everything was interconnected. We had a wonderful music department and this is where I fell in love with music. The first song I wanted to sing was one I heard on a musical film on TV 'Long Ago and Far Away' by Jerome Kern. All these old musicals came on TV regularly and I sat there with a tape recorder and recorded the songs which happened to be standards from the American songbook. That's how I learned my repertoire. I was totally engrossed in these movies. I learned all these wonderful songs by composers such as Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hart, Harold Arlen and many more. I would have been around 12, probably 13 at the time. My teachers found out that I was learning these songs and they really championed me.

I was mesmerised by this music whilst my family thought I was a "little mad" as they were listening to the Beatles and AC/DC and some soul music. At University, I was asked to join the jazz choir and that's when I was introduced to scatting and vocalese. One of the first pieces we were given was a great Phil Mattson arrangement of 'Birdland'. I was given the Wayne Shorter solo vocalese to sing. I was over the moon. An important teacher, Eric Brice, knew that I was developing a love for this style of music and asked me to join his combo- piano, bass and drums, and that's how I learned to work with a band. At that point, I wanted to understand more about jazz theory and harmony especially as I was interested in vocal improvisation and Eric suggested I join the jazz course at Adelaide Uni. I was one of two vocalists on the jazz course, where I studied to get my Bachelor of Arts in Jazz Performance.





I don't think I could have ever done anything else.

DT: When did you move back to the UK?

AW: After I left University in Adelaide I moved to Sydney and got some gig experience there for a couple of years. Whilst I was there, I won the jazz section of the Australian singing competition twice. In 1989, I decided to move back to the UK. I studied at the Guildhall school of Music and Drama in London where I was lucky enough to learn with some great teachers and musicians.

For five years, I sang in bars, small coffee shops and bistros and had great fun honing my craft within the London jazz scene. After quite a while I got my first break from Steve Rubie and sang at the 606 club. Not long after that and a real highlight of my

career, I received a call from the legendary Pete King, who booked the week long support sets at Ronnie Scotts Jazz Club, to perform my first week stint there opposite the Late Great James Moody. What an amazing opportunity. I subsequently appeared there at regular intervals during the 2000's supporting jazz greats such as Joe Zawinal, Joe Lovano, Lou Donaldson Dave Wekyl, Vincent Herring and many more. I spent many hours practising and studying to improve my craft.. As with any specialism, the deeper you dig the more there is to learn, which I truly enjoy.

DT: You are English, your family now lives in Australia, and you grew up there. You also have this link to the USA. So, you have experienced several cultural environments. How have all these experiences and differ-

ent cultures contributed to your personal and professional development?

AW: In a huge way, because one thing I love is meeting people from different walks of life. Everybody has something to teach us. Everybody has something to learn. Everyone has something to offer. I love to hear other people's stories, because it inspires me. So, I don't mind sharing my story, in the hope it may inspire somebody else. Travelling exposes us to new styles and fusions from different genres. For example, Fado from Portugal, Indian ragas and the varied time signatures from Eastern and European folk music, inspires arrangements and helps cultivate new ideas in rhythm, harmony and melody.

DT: When I listened to you at some of your concerts I was impressed by the way you were listening to the other musicians. I mean, everybody knows how interplay is important in performing. However, sometimes there's a competitive attitude in performing, especially in jazz music. What I felt in your performances is your deep way of listening to others. The way that you and the musicians of your band connect to each other is amazing, which is not to be taken for granted. It was not a competitive way to sing and to perform, but a sincere collective work. Is it related to your curiosity and openness to listening, which you were talking about before?

AW: I just got a shiver up my spine when you asked me that question, because that's really important and I think I've taken that for granted because I was told when I was at uni that we need to listen, it's about teamwork. You are not the diva or the be-all and end-all. It's not all about you, the individual. It's about the collective, I've always felt that. You listen because you want to be able to communicate with the band and be able to get deeply into the music. How can you communicate deeply, if you don't listen? Some performers are not aware of the depth of the music in terms of listening.

When I was younger, it felt hard to be part of the band and feel included. You might be really trying your hardest and you know,

you've studied and you're trying to improve. Listening and leaving space always leaves room for recovery when things go off track.

DT: Yes, and I think it's good to talk about this because we will experience this feeling in our career sometimes. We talked about the USA before, and I know that you went on a tour there recently. Can you tell me about it?

AW: For the past ten/eleven years, I've regularly visited the US on artist visas for which I'm really grateful for. I have learned so much during my visits and performances there over the years. Way back in 2004, I applied to sing and perform for the first time at the IAJE (International Association of Jazz Educators Conference) which was held in New York City.

I was successful in securing a performance spot and travelled to NYC for the first time with my UK band to perform for jazz industry people. I've kept in touch with many of the people I met that year.

Recently, I have come back from performing in Seattle and Washington State with the fabulous jazz Pianist Jeremy Siskind. Jeremy and I together, performed for three sold out House Concerts. Three lovely hosts opened their homes, each sporting gorgeous pianos. These evenings were incredible and so joyous! Before Jeremy and I left Seattle, we managed to organise sometime in the studio and recorded an EP which we plan to release in the near future. This art form is so universal. How wonderful to meet someone you don't know at all, play for the first time together and make musicIt was playful, challenging and so rewarding. It filled my soul! On this recent trip to the US, I also headed East to New York City, where I was invited to play two gigs. One, at a very hip wine bar with pianist, John De Martino and bassist, Dean Johnson and a surprise guest Pianist Jim Ridl. The second gig was at 'North Square', a little club in the Village. It was there I played with pianist,

Misha Tsiganov and bassist, Sam Bevan. Misha Tsiganov is someone I have known for many years but never had the chance to play with. The bass player, completely new to me, was Sam Bevan. This duo was so amazing to play with I felt so relaxed with them – they really swung. Can't wait to do that again.

DT: When you were away from home in the USA, what were the aspects that made it so special?

AW: If there's a gig- I love to play! I think just being away is exciting and special and the icing on the cake is the people you play with. There can be some very small differences in approaches in some aspects, but generally I find this music is a universal language. You can always find a meeting point!

Generally, I found it a wonderful experience to play with people in the US. I found the musicians very open with great suggestions for arrangements and song choices. So spontaneous.

DT: In the last few years there have been so many changes. The pandemic has been a breaking point in our lives. From that moment something happened, especially in the performing industry and market. You are an accomplished and well-known artist. any consequences for you too as a result of these events?

AW: In 2018, I relocated to Australia and accepted a vocal jazz teaching position at Adelaide University. My idea was to travel back and forth between both the UK and Australia and keep coming back to London for touring and gigs during uni breaks. In February 2020 the pandemic hit and everything shut down. The consequences of that were sad and disappointing, as it put a stop to this new venture of travelling and continuing the music projects for a while.

I loved the vital jazz scene in the UK and I wanted to keep my connections here in London and Europe.

The pandemic made me start questioning where I was in my life, what decisions and choices I was making and like many, I felt lost. Spending days and weeks alone without seeing people, not feeling connected to those close to me and musicians I had worked with for years.

The feeling of being isolated was exacerbated by this and the fact that I was perhaps not getting as much work as I used to, because of my age. During the pandemic I tried to use my time effectively and be ready for when we could go back to gigging. I joined a song writing group with Geoff Gasgoyne and other musician friends which helped a lot. Luckily, I could do my uni teaching online. It was a big adjustment for many musicians, not just myself. Many of us suffered from loss of income with no help from the government. It was heartbreaking and I started to feel so distant from communicating musically.

DT: Isolation is the one of the main topics that we have highlighted while talking and sharing experiences through Women in Jazz Media with colleagues and musicians. The pandemic events have increased that feeling.

AW: Yes, the pandemic was a challenge and still there are many women in jazz that feel isolated. We need to stand together and create change. To be as positive and supportive as possible. It's amazing that Women in Jazz Media are doing so much to create opportunities for women. Helping us to string together and make connections that are meaningful and powerful. Experienced female artists need support just as much as newer artists do. Let's not forget the wisdom of older women and the experiences and the hard graft they have had to do to pave the way for female musicians of any age.

DT: Oh yes, it's just doing something to break this circle!





AW: Yes! To create more projects, new opportunities to be seen and heard. It's important to have compassion for other people and their journeys. Also, to be kind to yourself. I think we need that always.

DT: Yes, I love it. There is another topic that I want to discuss with you, and this is invisibility. Thanks to Women in Jazz Media connections, we experienced a rise in comments about invisibility among female musicians. Maybe because the pandemic made things harder than before. I'd like to ask your opinion about this. What do you think invisibility means in the jazz industry?

AW: It's a sensitive and personal subject. Last year, I started having more and more concerns about ageism and how it affects older people, in this case, older women in any work field. My dear friend and jazz singer Karen Lane AU/UK introduced me to Jane Evans AUS/UK, founder of Uninvisibility, a project that aims to raise the profile of women over the age of 50. Jane is Executive creative director. Activist. Author. Champion of midlife women and is inspired to keep pushing for greater visibility. Jane created a multi-media campaign about bringing older women into the spotlight. It is about women's experiences of getting older and how to push through the barriers, to still feel vital and worthy and seen and heard. Jane has appeared and spoken on some great podcasts about this you can hear these on Spotify "MagnificentMiddleage."

Where do we go from here and how do we feel valid? And how do we feel visible to the industry? We're still learning and still trying to grow. We still have so much to say, we still have valuable information to impart. And... we're still people as well. Quite a few women (myself included) that I've been speaking to recently in jazz, are feeling undervalued and invisible and easily forgotten.

DT: Thanks for that Anita. You are also a teacher. Lots of changes happened in education too during the pandemic. Even the role of teachers is changing over time. What are the changes that you face in your role as a jazz singing teacher? What are the challenges that you experience with your students right now?

AW: That's an interesting question because I do a lot of teaching. I find nowadays that students have a strong sense of how they want to approach their learning. It seems the role of a teacher has become more like a guide. We have to work with students- suggest ideas and projects that appeal to them. I like to lead them to what I hope will inspire them and their learning and at the same time inform them of the important elements that will give them the knowledge they need to improve in areas that might be challenging for them. I want my students to enjoy their learning process. There are areas in jazz that can cause some anxiety at first- I see this when the student is asked to improvise. So, I like to help them find their way by breaking things down into manageable chunks. It's wonderful to see their faces light up when they have executed something they perhaps thought was not achievable. I am very interested in teaching and the ways to help the student find who they are and what they love through the music itself. I don't like to talk too much in the lesson. Practical seems the most effective way- let the student have a chance to find it! All of my students are wonderful, they're respectful, and they're very excited about the music.

DT: What would you say to a new student that comes to you on their first day, and says: 'I want to become a jazz singer?'

AW: The first thing I'd ask is 'what elements of jazz do you feel most connected to'.

There are so many! I get great answers Traditional jazz singing, like Sarah, Ella and Carmen McRae. More Soul/pop influenced – like Amy Winehouse. Sometimes I want to sing wordlessly- or bebop scat (I get excited with this answer- ha ha) or Brazilian music. It's so diverse and I love it. It also tells me they actually listen to the music. I then explain how important it is to listen to as many styles and recordings and live concerts as possible. This way I feel I have understood where they want to go with it. It's all about listening isn't it? Listening to all elements: 'who you're playing with? What are they saying musically? What they're saying voice wise?' It's about what they want.

DT: Going back to you as a singer, there are so many things that I could ask you about your wonderful way of interpretation, or everything related to your beautiful voice. But there is one thing that I really love and it is improvisation. A jazz singer does not necessarily have to improvise. But you really love doing it and you make it shine. What does improvisation mean to you?

AW: I love that question. Improvisation means to me ultimate freedom melodically, rhythmically and emotionally. I feel like I can truly be myself when I improvise. I accept myself when I'm improvising and live in the moment. I love experimenting with harmony, rhythm and melody.

I like to invite all the elements of my personality with improvisation: playfulness, a sense of strength, the powerfulness, softness and the sadness within me.

I feel that I have a sense of being at one with myself when I'm improvising. Even if I make mistakes, even if I miss a chord change or it gets out somehow- whatever...it is the ability to experiment and explore and recover. I'm a free spirit as a person and I think that

comes out in my improvising.

DT: How is improvisation developing in your daily work?

AW: I'm becoming much more scrupulous about things like tuning, rhythm, harmonic and melodic sense and dynamics.

I want my soloing to sound musical with the jazz history intact. I find it so interesting to practise lines and create melodies and go for an authentic sound.

Ear training is an important part of my practice. I transcribe and practice hearing this way. I sing etudes and run through extended arpeggios, this is great for improving intonation. After working on these I start adding the altered extensions to train my ears.

DT: My last question is: what are your musical plans for the future?

AW: What I want to do now is to record a new quartet CD with Robin Aspland, Jeremy Brown, Steve Brown and myself. I haven't done a quartet album since 2012. I also want to continue my visits to the USA and play some more concerts with the musicians I have met recently there.

DT: And I wish you best of luck for that! Thank you so much Anita, it was a pleasure interviewing you.

AW: Thanks Diana!



ANITA WARDELL
LINKS CLICK HERE



The award winning composer and violinist Aline Homzy has recently released her debut album *eclipse* with her band *étoile magique* to rave reviews. An artist with a rich background of experiences, she has worked with artists from across the globe including Munir Hossn (Brazil), Jake Sherman (USA), Leah Michelle (USA), Ed Sheeran (Great Britain), Danilo Pérez (Panama), Cho Yong-Won (South Korea) and Mikko Hildén (Sweden). Passionate about community, she has created several inspired initiatives to support low-income families and women in the improvised music scene.

1. The new album has taken you ten years to complete and is described as having ‘laser-sharp focus and intention’. Can you tell us about the new album and how that focus and intention is presented in the album?

This is my debut album and I wanted to make sure that my very first artistic statement as a leader reflected myself and my music. I chose specific musicians to play with me: Michael Davidson on the vibes, Dan Fortin on bass, Thom Gill on guitar, Marito Marques on drums and special guests João Frade on accordion and Felicity Williams on vocals.

The album is an expression of the music I have written over the course of the last decade. These compositions have been through many different iterations, arrangements, have morphed and been distilled to take shape and fit on this album. They also reflect the changes in me that have shaped my existence over the past decade; a lot of the themes have shadowed me and evolved dramatically as my human experience has shifted. Time has coloured these ideas, bringing a level of depth and nuance that may not have been so clear to me those years ago.

2. The lineup for your new album is wonderful. Can you tell us how the musical relationships with those musicians were established and what the recording experience was like?

Finding the right collaborators and bandmates can take a lot of time. For me, it’s

about establishing trust and building a healthy relationship with my bandmates – I think this contributes to stronger music making. Because we recorded in the middle of the pandemic, I took advantage of a new process. We went to a studio in a small town, by the lake, and we stayed there for a week. Having the chance to explore and develop this music in the studio was an exciting approach for me. I had never had the chance to do this before and had always been told that pre-production is what will determine the success of your recording. I found it refreshing to record in this way – to actually be able to be somewhat spontaneous in the studio and discover sounds and even other instruments (the theremin!) to add to the mix.

3. You studied with Sara Caswell, Sy Johnson and Aki Takase and your bio states that this had a ‘profound impact’ on your musical trajectory. Can you define that profound impact and how this has shaped your journey?

Having different perspectives is so important when you’re learning about yourself and your craft. Having these very diverse musicians, multigenerational voices lend me their wisdom is something I cannot be thankful enough for. Sara was instrumental in pushing me to transcribe pieces like Chick Corea’s *Samba Yantra*, a piece I would never have imagined playing on the violin. Sy and I worked on a lot of arranging and composition – we spent hours in his Upper East Side apartment, where the bathtub was in the kitchen, talking about Mingus’ music and discussing and playing a lot of music for each other. Aki is a wonderful composer and pianist. Her approach to spontaneous music making really inspires me. She has a way – sort of in the same vein as Mingus – to weave in and out of the unexpected but always finding a safe space.

4. We are all inspired by many legacy artists and with your work Monk, Mingus and Ellington have a strong presence in

10 QUESTIONS FOR ALINE HOMZY

In partnership with Kind of Jazz



your compositions. What is it that connects you to these artists?

With these three in particular, it's their approach to composition versus improvising. They each have such a unique and particular way of playing their instrument but that also transcends into their composing. I find them to be inspiring as they never compromise. Mingus was always involved in some sense in the political side of certain aspects and I really do see music and art as a way to connect us in difficult political situations.

5. "Aline's étoile magique" was created with a reference to 'the stark and low presence of women in the improvised music scene.' This is a topic that we could and should explore in depth, but for now, could you share some of the thoughts and experiences you have had in the improvised music scene as a female violinist and how this has inspired the album?

Being a violinist is already a rare thing in the jazz community and being a woman violinist in the jazz community is quite unusual. Especially where I live, in Toronto. The community is welcoming, however, it always seems to take a bit more effort to prove oneself in this position. I think the album's music has a lot to do with me finding a way to express myself in my own way... to be able to play my music with people I admire and respect and who respect me too is such a gift.

6. You are also very passionate about creating fair-pay opportunities for underrepresented musicians in the community. Can you tell us about some of the initiatives you have created?

In Canada, we are very fortunate to have a robust government arts grant system. It's a system that pushes artists to think creatively in order to help grow and strengthen our communities. Because of such funding, I have been able to produce concerts and series that highlight underrepresented musicians while being able to shine a light on the financial struggles that some experience. The living

and housing situation in Toronto is in dire need of a boost – so many artists (and others) have been pushed out of the city and we are really seeing the start of lifeless communities.

7. You have been performing at some great festival across Canada over the summer. Any plans for performances outside of Canada?

I am really hoping to be able to share our music internationally! Booking this tour, all on my own, was so much work that I needed to take a break from some of the administrative side of things. But I am hoping that this album will also connect me to agents and others who are interested in seeing this project grow and reach other countries.

8. Jazz violinists are still quite rare. Who have your violin inspirations been?

Growing up, my father made sure my sister (who is also a violinist) and I were exposed to violinists from all genres. We listened to a lot of Stuff Smith, Joe Venuti and of course, Stéphane Grappelli. Later on, I discovered Regina Carter and I started to enjoy playing along with her recordings and lifting her solos. In college, I had the opportunity to play a lot of the Mahavishnu Orchestra's music so I was exposed to Jerry Goodman and of course, Jean-Luc Ponty. I do have to mention that most of my training in jazz – my inspirations, have been away from violinists. I started to gravitate towards trumpet players such as Booker Little, Freddie Hubbard, Clifford Brown and Lee Morgan. This might be unusual, but they really inspired me to find my sound on the violin.

9. You last released a single in 2020 called 'In The Moon' inspired by Christie Gray whose work is to support people to 'strive to be good humans and to contribute positively to society'. How



important is community to you and how do you feel music fits into this?

Christie is a wonderful human and she used to be my boss at Toronto Sistema. We've both moved on from that wonderful space, but Christie instilled in me the importance of social positivity, through music and how we can teach the younger generations about being empathetic humans. We did this through teaching these children music and I carry that with me when I teach my college students now as well.

Community is key because we humans need connection, we need each other to survive. We become better people surrounded by all kinds of ideas and perspectives that only together we can create and evolve. This, I feel, feeds into my music-making and it invigorates and inspires my creative practice.

10. And lastly, how do you hope people will feel after listening to your new album?

I hope this album brings positivity, reflection and that it offers the listeners the chance to embark on a journey with us. I hope people will connect with the music, that it awakens their curiosity and that they can bring this fresh energy with them to their everyday lives.

I hope it shines a light on the possibilities of the violin within improvised music. Furthermore, this album presents a group of people playing chamber-music – it just happens to be unconventional.



Do visit the Kind of Jazz website for lots of great views and interviews!

Click on the logo!



**ALINE HOMZY
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HERE**

Kim Cypher's BRIGHTER TOMORROW – The Album Coming 2024!

A stunning eclectic collection of original compositions and arrangements, marking an era of time and celebrating those who continue to contribute to a brighter tomorrow for The Arts.

FEATURING:

KIM CYPHER on tenor, alto and soprano saxophones, vocals and clarinet
With SPECIAL GUESTS:

LIANE CARROLL on piano and vocals

RAY GELATO on tenor saxophone and vocals

ASHLEY SLATER on trombone, vocals and brass

ANTONIO FORCIONE on guitar

Together with an ALL-STAR lineup including:

KARL VANDEN-BOSSCHE | GEORGE COOPER | ANDERS OLINDER |

TOM BERGE |

JONNY BRUCE | IAN BATEMAN | ALAN BATEMAN | RAPH MIZRAKI |

CHRIS COBBSON |

MIKE CYPHER

Produced by Kim Cypher

Sound Recording by Juanjo Lopez Vidal

Search or post [#brightertomorrowforthearts](#) on socials to join the celebration!

Here's a selection of recording photos and notes from the project book...

[KIM CYPHER LINKS HERE](#)

PHOTO BY RON MILSOM

KIM CYPHER AND A BRIGHTER TOMORROW THE ALBUM COMING 2024!





606 Club
'live' recording

Double bass
Guitar answer phrase
32 bar guitar solo
Guitar - double up

Recording Photos &
notes from the project book

Acoustic
track

Album No. 3

Trumpet / Trombone / Sax

Down solo @
Uniquel's
ending??

Guitar - harmony
Guitar - fills between

Sax Solo in
'Birdie'?

'TOGETHER'

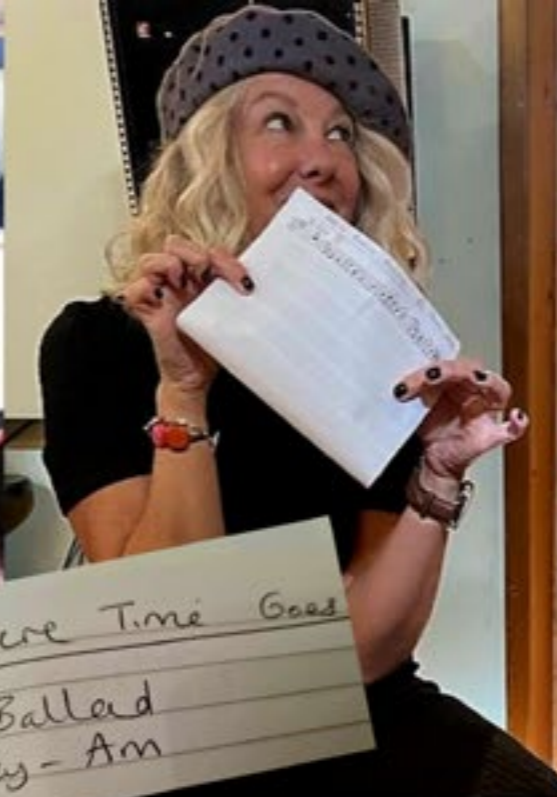




Contra Basso
Where Time Goes - Ballad
#100000 Tomorrow's Song
7. Birdie in the Hat - Ballad
8. Together - Together
9. Tomorrow's Song - Live
- also, Craig Tinsler - Allman Bros
Tiempos Locos
10 original tracks plus
arrangements



LATIN
Bass Intro
Sax
Piano



Where Time Goes
Ballad
key - Am



Time = 5
Song = 2
LATIN
#brighter-horizons



Trombone Solo 😊



Add Brass



Tenor Sax
Exchanges



Vocal & sax duet
SWING!



Piano Solo
AAB



Tiempos Locos
Album Remix



Our podcast series cover a wide range of topics, all created to platform, inform, discuss and celebrate women working in the jazz industry. You can find our podcasts at Number 12 in the top 60 Best Jazz Podcasts in FeedSpot!

We were thrilled to have our 'In Conversation With...' series nominated by the Women's International Podcast awards in the 'Changing the World one moment at a time' category.

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THE WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA PODCAST SERIES



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WITH HOST HANNAH HORTON

Click on the images to go straight to the podcast!

Jo Harrop
Migdalia Van Der Hoven
Catherine Tackley
JAM String Collective



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky

STICKS AND THRONES

Shining a light on
drummers from around
the world



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Ciara Chinniah
Abbie Finn



WITH
MIGDALIA
VAN DER HOVEN

THE NOTES BETWEEN WITH LARA EIDI



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Ashaine White, Daisy Chute, Ese Okorodudu, Kate Smith, Lara De Belder and Liv Monaghan

A podcast series about the world of songwriting

Photo by Alexandros Petrakis

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Exploring the world of female authors, this podcast series highlights and promotes books and their authors from around the world. Fascinating conversations with inspirational women with host Fiona Ross.

Click on the images to go straight to the podcast!

Tammy Kernodle, Tish Oney, Jordannah Elizabeth Joan Cartwright, Paulette Jackson, Monika Herzig Maria Golia and Stephanie Stein Crease



SHARON RAE NORTH: A MUSICAL GEM BY PAULETTE JACKSON

Music has a way of connecting us all in some way, shape, or form, especially with the age of social media and I for one am very happy for the wonderful connections and friendships I have made in this industry (which is often hard to do).

Another wonderful and versatile artist I have had the pleasure of connecting with and watching is none other than Ms. Sharon Rae North. Not only is Ms. North a passionate artist, she is also a published author (as I am). I will get back to her books in just one moment, first let us dive into her background and music, shall we?

Ms. North's vocal style is really calming and her tone is reassuring to the person who is fortunate enough to listen. The passion for her music shines through in not only her recordings, but also in her live shows. This to me, always shows just how much the music really transitions their spirits and how they deliver to their in-person audiences.

Let's take Ms. North's latest single release, "The Kiss that Wakes You" (from her 2022 album "Silhouette" written by Vinx and produced by Grammy nominee, Chris "Big Dog" Davis). It is so vocally sweet and together with the backing musicians makes this particular single a musical fairy tale come true. "The Kiss that Wakes You" was released February 2023 and is still going strong!

Please note that Ms. North has so much

great music out there and I urge those of you who are jazz lovers to definitely add Sharon Rae North's music to your collection. As I have listened to various of her tracks, I feel a calm in my spirit, her vocals are effortless and flows quite nicely. Another track from Ms. North that caught my attention is her 2022 release, "Heart of Mine", written by the late, great Bobby Caldwell and produced by guitarist and twice Grammy winner, Paul Brown. It is so rich and melodic, each time I listen, I hear something a little different in it. As a fan of jazz music, that is what I expect: to catch something different each time I listen. Paul Brown was a perfect choice for production on this single (Side note: I had the pleasure of meeting Paul Brown in San Diego a few years ago while co-hosting Paul Brown's Jazz Diego).

Please check out "Silhouette" by Sharon Rae North, available on iTunes and other digital platforms.

As I mentioned earlier, Ms. North is also a published author! Her most recent book release, "Frantically Frances" (October 2022, and based off the sayings of her mother, Frances W. North) is available on Barnes & Noble and Amazon. Be sure to check out her other book as well, "My Brand New Leg" (January 2003). Sharon Rae North: a name you don't want to forget and whose music will stand the test of time.



PHOTO BY NUSRAT MOMIN



the kiss that wakes you
sharon rae north

SHARON RAE NORTH
LINKS CLICK HERE

Frantastically Frances - The Sayings and Snarks of My Mama, the Senior

by Sharon Rae North

Frantastically Frances



*The
Sayings
and
Snarks
of My
Mama,
the Senior*

*by Sharon Rae North
illustrations by Alvin Maurice Long*

ON THE
Women in
Jazz Media
PLAYLIST



CHARLOTTE KEEFFE BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

BRAD STONE

We are thrilled to welcome the award-winning Brad Stone back as our guest curator for our Women in Jazz Media Playlist for this edition.

Brad has been a radio programmer and music director for the past 40+ years and is the host of the brilliant 'The Creative Source' on www.soulandjazz.com which always features a beautifully diverse mix of progressive jazz and fusion, new jazz releases, current artists and original compositions. He is also the 2-time winner of the Bobby Jackson Award for Internet/Non-terrestrial jazz programming, 7-time winner of Jazz Programmer of the Year with Gavin and JazzWeek and winner of the Duke DuBois Humanitarian Award at JazzWeek for lifetime contributions to the jazz music and jazz radio community.

To listen to Brad's 'The Creative Source' show on Soul and Jazz, click [here](#)

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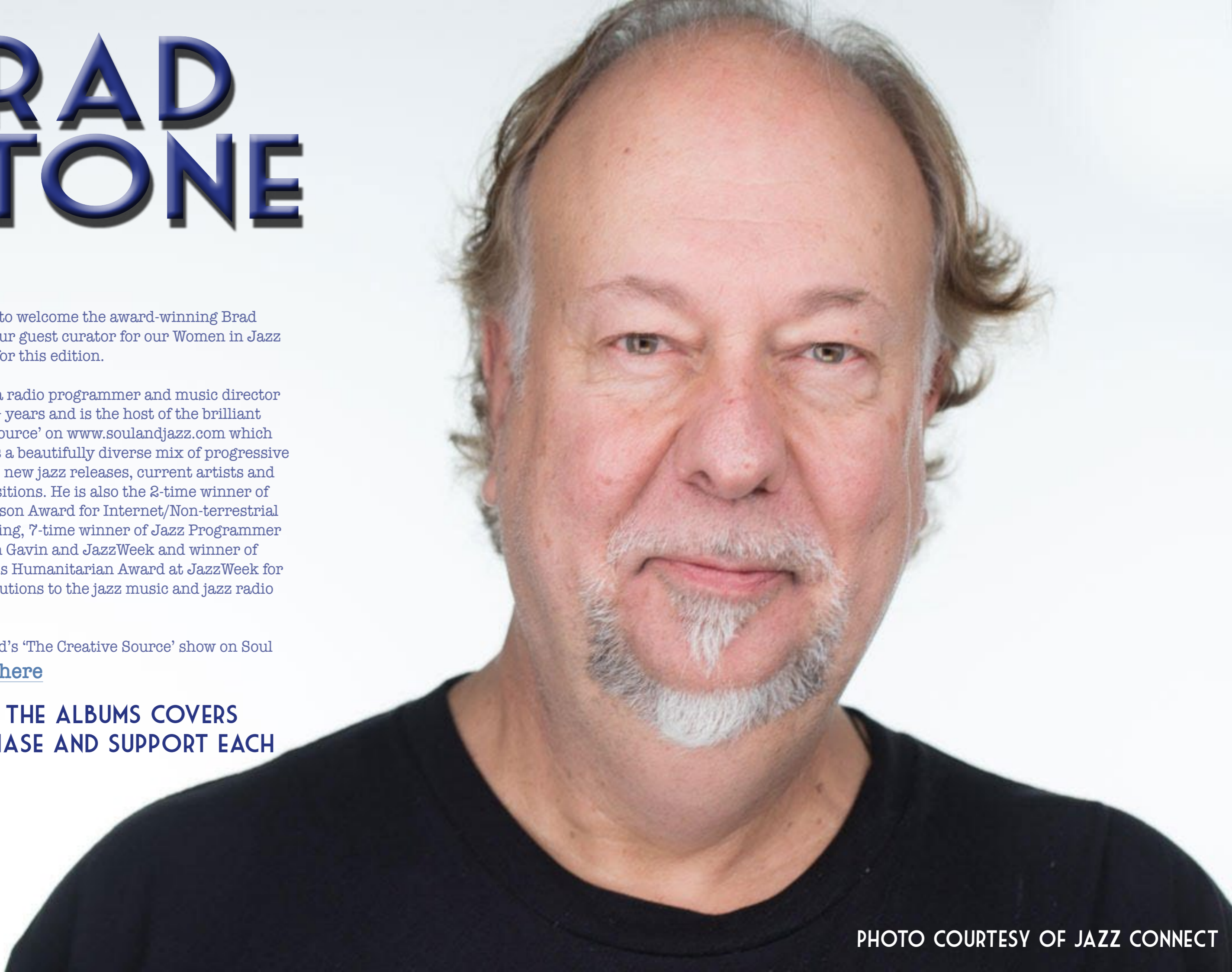


PHOTO COURTESY OF JAZZ CONNECT

MONIKA HERZIG AND JANIECE JAFFE



Monika Herzig and Janiece Jaffe
“Both Sides of Joni”
ACME Records
2023

Joni Mitchell has always been a composer of revered stature, but that stature seems to continue to grow and be further recognized. Monika Herzig and Janiece Jaffe have created an extraordinary tribute to Joni and her compositions with this release. Conceived and recorded by the pair before vocalist Jaffe’s unfortunate passing in 2022. Ms. Herzig’s brilliant arrangements of Joni’s compositions, including rich reharmonizations, shine throughout the album. Monika is listed as playing piano only, but she uses electronic keyboards on this album as well. A stellar band, including Monika’s husband Peter Kienle on guitar, executes the material beautifully. This material continued to be performed live after Ms. Jaffe’s death, with the wonderful Alexis Cole filling in on vocals. Ms. Herzig, a native of Germany, recently left her position as Professor of Music at the prestigious Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University to take up a similar academic post in Vienna.



MAREIKE WIENING

Mareike Wiening
“Reveal”
Greenleaf Music
2023

Drummer Mareike Wiening leads a talented cast in this set of mostly her own compositions. Originally hailing from Germany, Mareike now resides in New York, where this album was recorded. The album was released on Dave Douglas’s Greenleaf record label – Dave serves as Executive Producer and appears on trumpet on 3 tracks. The album also features the very fine pianist Glenn Zaleski, guitarist Alex Goodman, Rich Perry on tenor and Johannes Felscher on bass. Mareike’s compositions are at times modern and progressive, but always rooted firmly in the jazz idiom.



PHOTO BY WOLF PETER STEINHEIER

JOANNA WALLFISCH



Joanna Wallfisch
"All in Time"
Galileo Music Communications
2023

I find it interesting that Los Angeles based singer/songwriter Joanna Wallfisch's new album was released on the wonderful Galileo label out of Germany. Joanna brings her remarkable songwriting skills to bear in this compelling and hauntingly beautiful set of her own compositions. Is this a jazz album? Well, not really, but there are jazz elements in her music along with other genres. Corey Frank provides some wonderful keyboard work on piano, organ, Mellotron and Wurly. In addition to her vocals, Joanna also plays ukulele and charango. Other instruments include harp, violin, bass and drums. Regardless of what genre of music you gravitate towards, I strongly recommend that you check out this beautiful record!

PHOTO BY BRETT STANLEY

CHRISTIE DASHIELL



PHOTO BY COLVILLE HESKEY



Christie Dashiell, "Journey in Black" Christie Dashiell 2023

This young woman has taken jazz radio in the U.S. by storm - for good reason! Her vocal work is simply stunning, and her composing (7 of the 9 songs on the album are hers) matches well with her extraordinary vocal talents. Nice keyboard work by Allyn Johnson, supplemented by great work on organ by Shedrick Mitchell. Marquis Hill appears here on trumpet. Romier Mendez holds down the bass chair and Carroll Dashiell III provides the drum work. I encourage everyone to check out Christie's song "Grief" from this album- it brought tears to my eyes.



**SHUTEEN
ERDENEBAATAR**

**Shuteen Erdenebaatar Quartet
“Rising Sun”
Motéma Recods
2023**

Originally hailing from Ulan Baatar, Mongolia, Ms. Erdenebaatar now resides in Munich, Germany. She possesses an impressive facility on the piano for a young musician. However what most impresses me is her compositional ability. All of the compositions on this album are written, arranged and produced by her. Her quartet of Munich based musicians quite capably bring Shuteen’s deep compositions to life. I think Shuteen will be a force to be reckoned with for years to come – I look forward to hearing more from her!

PHOTO BY RALF DOMBROWSKI

JOCELYN GOULD



Jocelyn Gould, “Sonic Bouquet” Jocelyn Gould Music 2023

Guitarist Jocelyn Gould brings us her 3rd album with “Sonic Bouquet”. She is accompanied by some first call musicians: Will Bonness on piano, Rodney Whitaker on bass and Quincy Davis on drums, along with maestro Randy Napoleon on guitar as well, and Virginia MacDonald on clarinet on 4 tracks. To me the ultimate demonstration of confidence in one’s own abilities is to have another musician on the same instrument appear on an album, as Jocelyn does here with her mentor Randy Napoleon. I’m also impressed by the nice balance on this album’s arrangements between all of the players – it’s not a “hey, look at me” endeavor, although Jocelyn’s impressive guitar work is certainly a highlight. Nice balance of standards, lesser known compositions by prominent composers, and 4 tunes written by Ms. Gould and Mr. Napoleon. A must for jazz guitar fans.



PHOTOS BY BNB STUDIOS

TINA RAYMOND



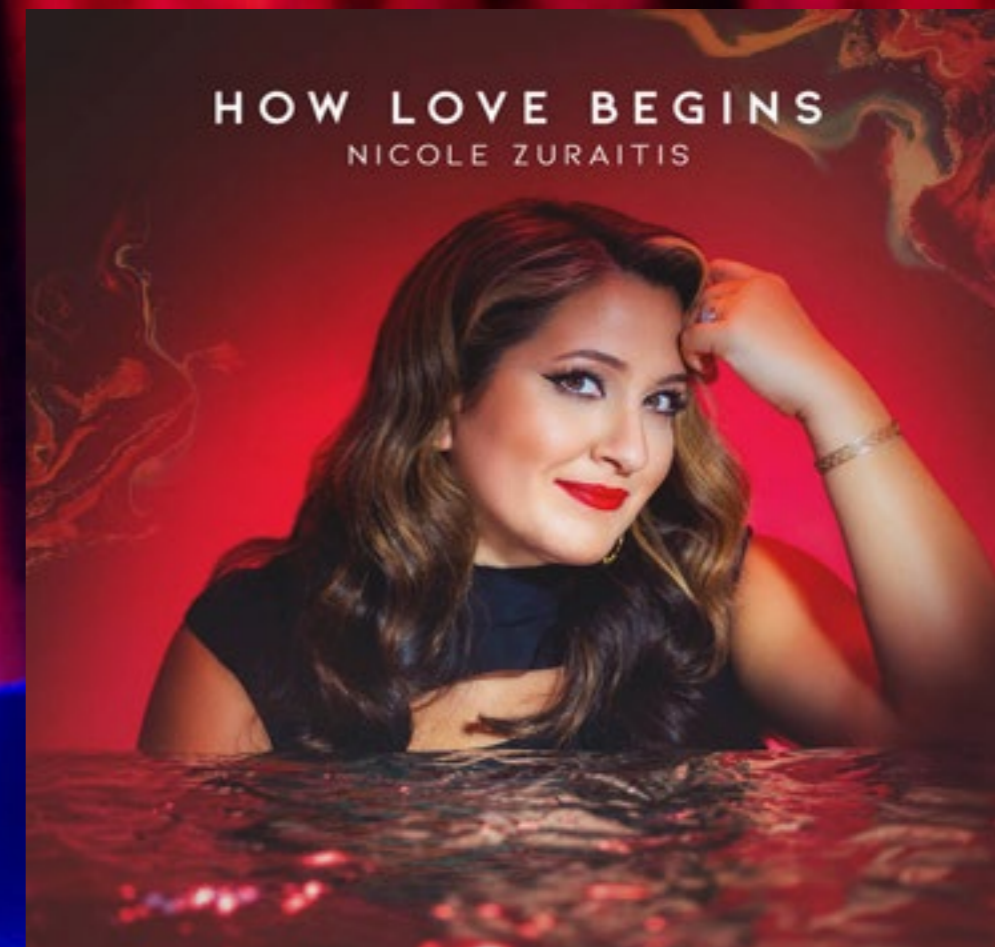
Tina Raymond
“Divinations”
Imani Records
2023

Tina Raymond is a drummer and educator here in California. She is the Director of Jazz Studies at California State University, Northridge. Recently she has been a member of the jazz supergroup Esthesis, with their most recent release “Time Zones”. She has contributed to many albums as a sidewoman, but I believe this release is her sophomore album as a leader. This is solely a trio effort, with guitar master Andrew Renfroe and Kari McComas-Reichl on bass. 6 compositions, all by Tina...so melodic and musical! Released on Orrin Evans’ Imani Records label.



PHOTO BY ANNE WEBBER

NICOLE ZURAITIS



Nicole Zuraitis
“How Love Begins”
Outside In Music
2023

Nicole Zuraitis is a truly unique vocalist, songwriter and musician. Her latest album, “How Love Begins”, was Grammy nominated in 2023 for Best Jazz Vocal Album. Co-produced with Christian McBride, the album also features Dan Pugach (drums), Maya Kronfeld (keys), Gilad Hekselman (Guitar) and Christian McBride (bass). Billy Kilson also guests on drums. I love the fact that Nicole, in addition to composing and providing the vocals, also plays piano and Rhodes on this album. Great compositions, arrangements, production and performances.
Love it!

JENNIFER WHARTON



Jennifer Wharton's Bonegasm
"Grit & Grace"
Sunnyside
2023

Trombonist, composer, bandleader and arranger Jennifer Wharton had a vision. Instead of having a band with a trombonist as a leader, why not one with 4 trombonists?...and the concept works brilliantly!! Jennifer leads the group on bass trombone, along with husband John Fedchock (trombone and producer), Nate Mayland (trombone), Alan Ferber (trombone), Michael Ekroth (piano), Evan Gregor (bass), Don Perez (drums), and Samuel Torres (percussion). A most enjoyable album - proof that if one trombone is good, four is great!



PHOTO BY JOHN ABBOTT

CLAUDIA VILLELA



Claudia Villela
“Cartas ao Vento”
Claudia Villela
2023

Carioca Claudia Villela now calls the Santa Cruz mountains in California home. Her new album is nothing short of an astonishing achievement. Featuring original compositions by Claudia, I am particularly pleased to witness her playing piano on this release, which she always does quite capably. Also featuring a host of top-notch Brazilian musicians, including the legendary Toninho Horta, Vitor Gonçalves, Romero Lubambo, and along with Mario Adnet on multiple instruments and production. Hauntingly gorgeous, perhaps my favorite album of hers to date! If you ever get the chance (and the pleasure and honor) to see her live, please do not pass up the opportunity!



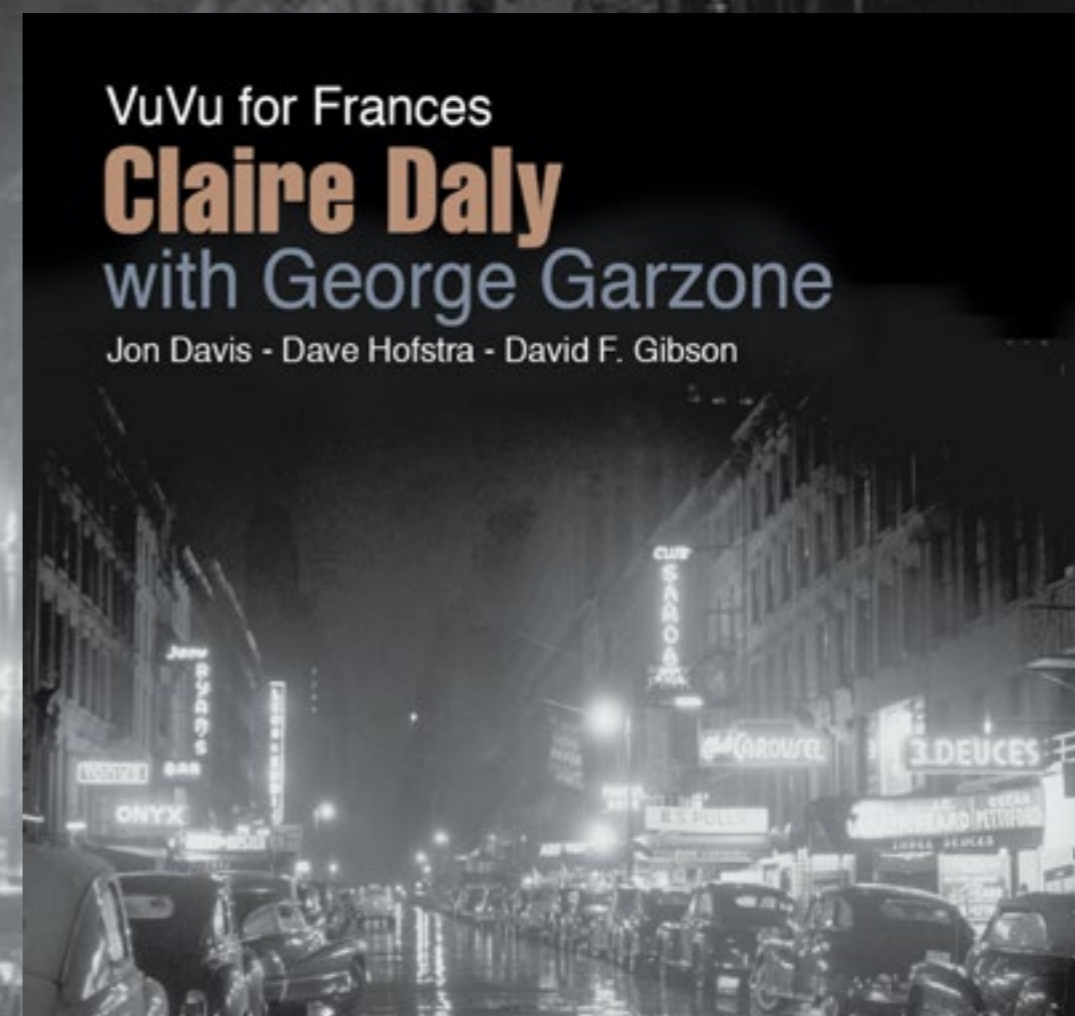
PHOTO BY TINA VILLELA

Claire Daly, with George Garzone
"VuVu for Frances"
Claire Daly
2023

VuVu for Frances Claire Daly with George Garzone

Jon Davis - Dave Hofstra - David F. Gibson

When one thinks about the handful of baritone saxophonists on the scene today as leaders, one must include Claire Daly. She invites tenor master George Garzone for this homage to a longtime jazz fan. Along with Jon Davis, Dave Hofstra and David F. Gibson, the band goes through a nice excursion of standards and originals. Check out "The Ballad of Harrison Crabfeathers", an original of Claire's. I think I'll order a copy of the vinyl LP, while it is still available!



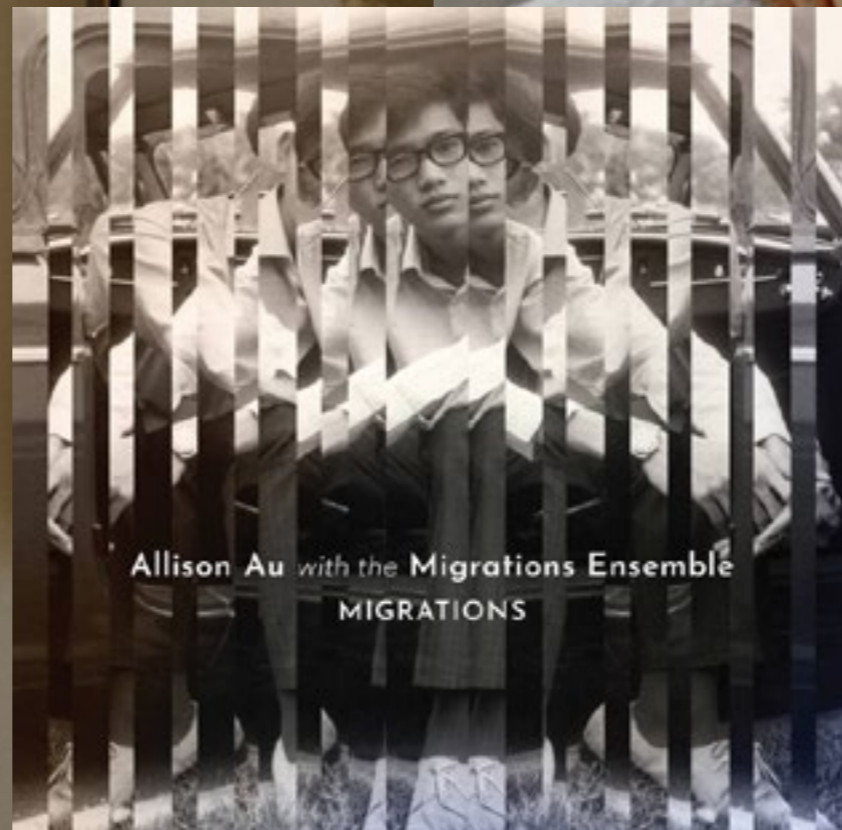
ALLISON AU

Allison Au with the Migrations Ensemble
“Migrations”
Allison Au
2023

One of the aspects of today’s jazz, and progressive music in general that excites me most is the significant number of young composers, with fresh ideas who are moving this music forward. Count Toronto’s Allison Au among the very best and brightest. Her new album “Migrations” pays homage to her immigrant Chinese and Jewish ancestors. Featuring Allison on alto, Laila Biali on vocals, along with piano, bass, drums, vibes and a string quartet, the Migrations Ensemble does a fine job bringing Ms. Au’s sophisticated compositions to life. I see that she’s just released a vinyl version – I have to get one!



Photo by Agnes Wywrot



PHOTOS BY AGNES WYWROT



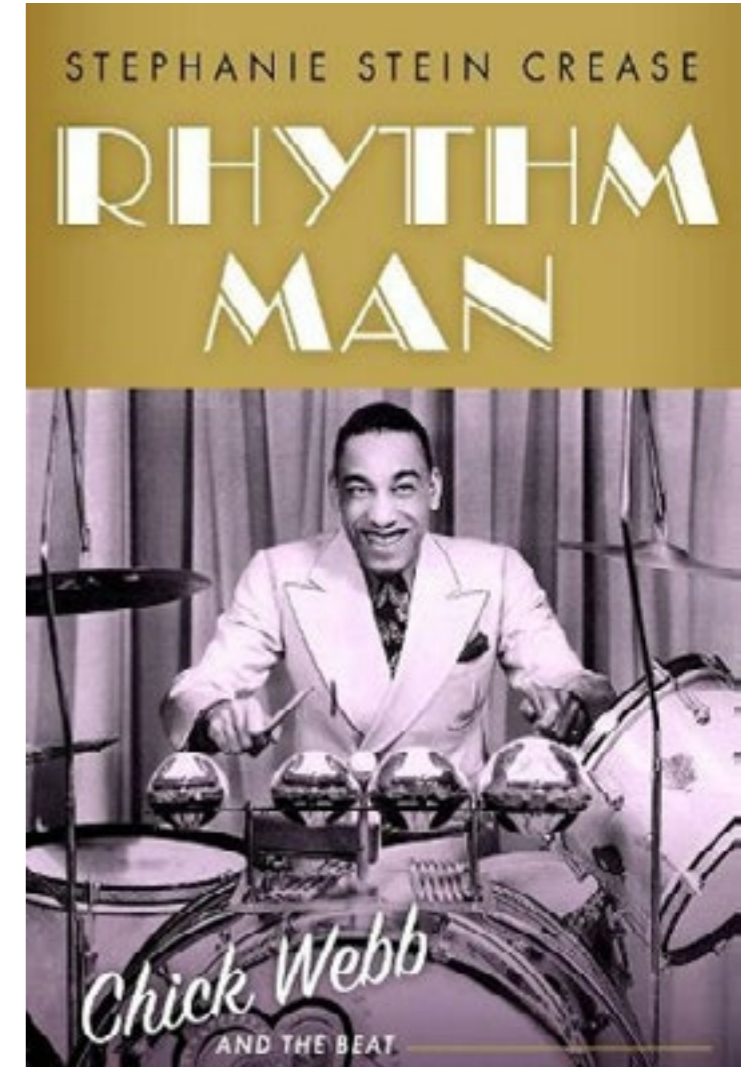
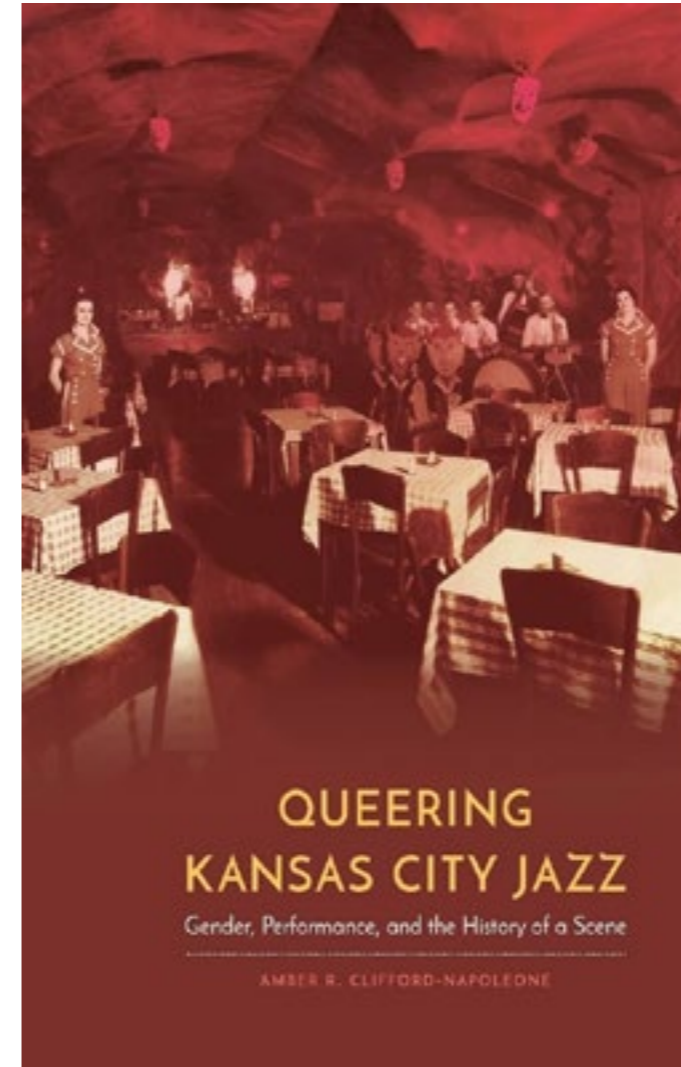
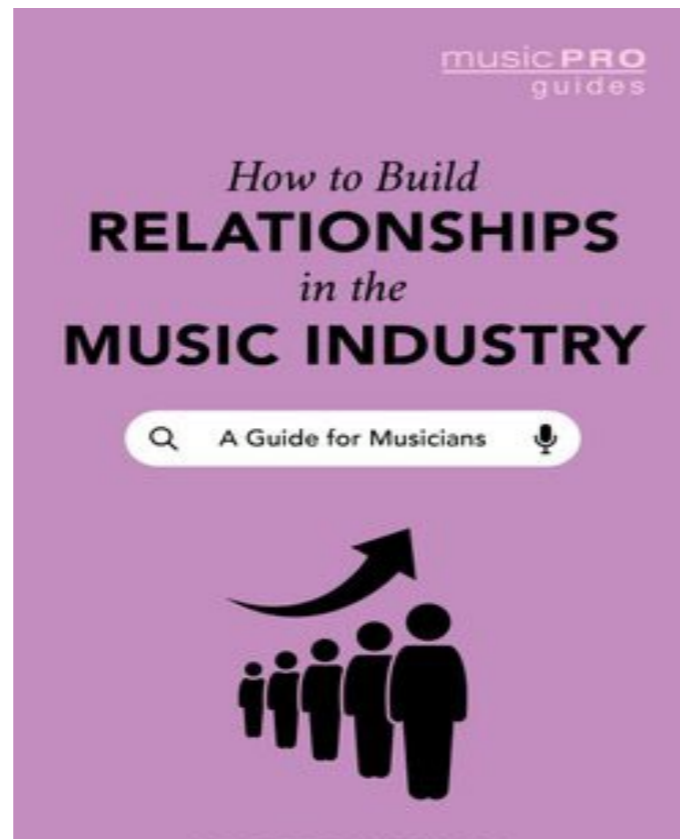
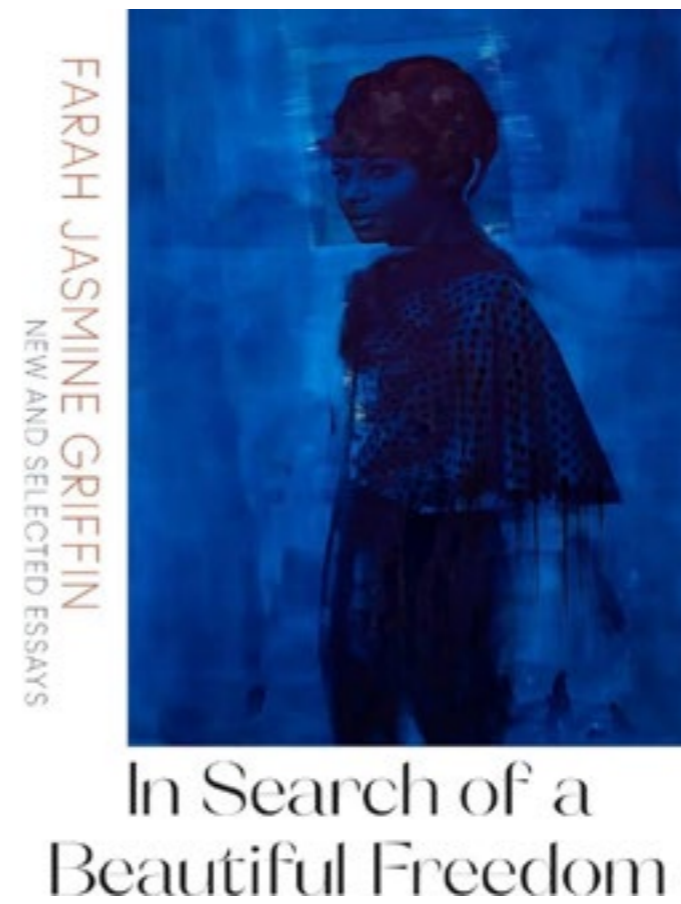
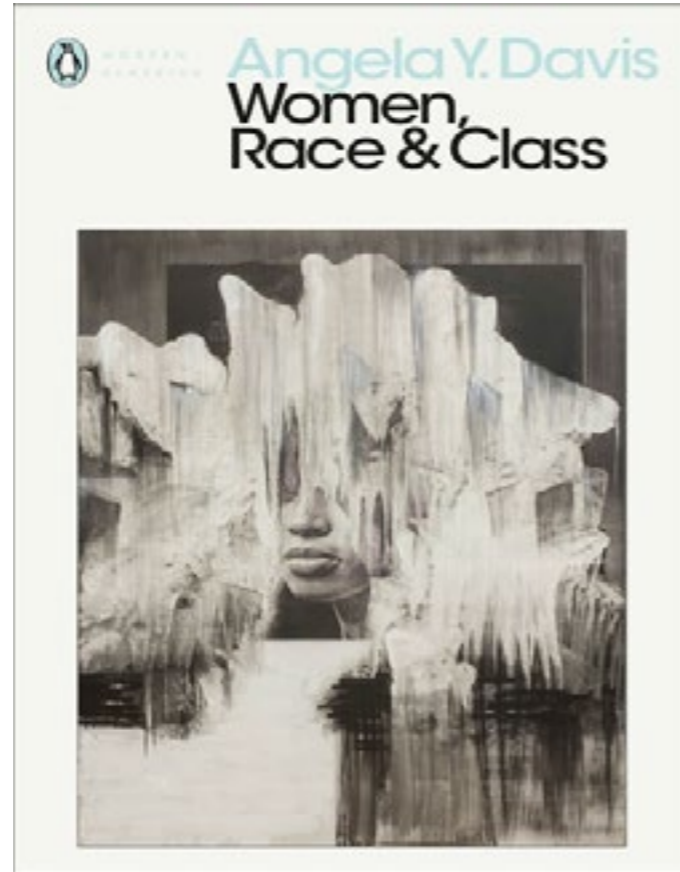
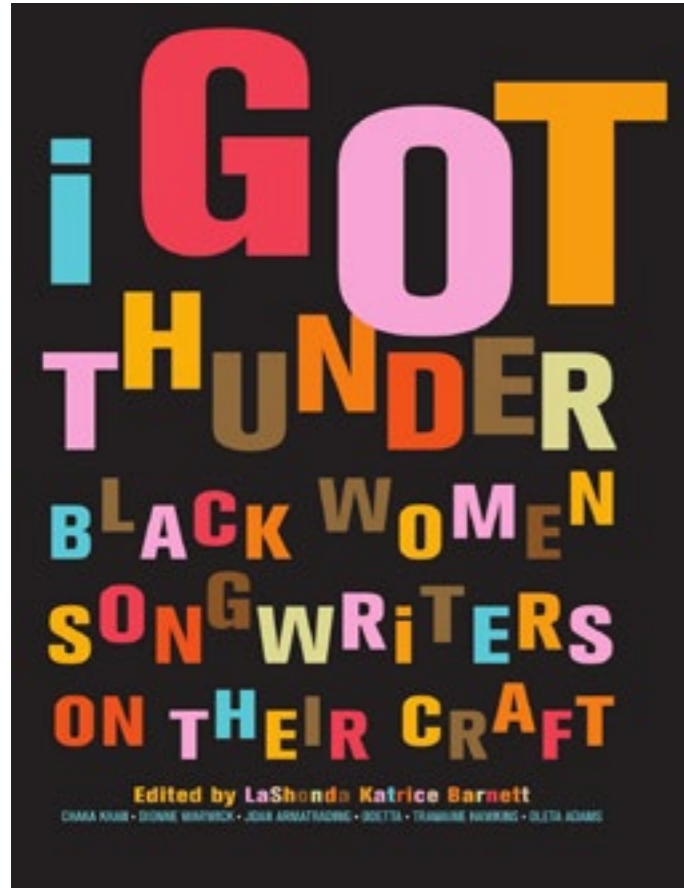
LENORA ZENALAI HELM

Lenora Zenalai Helm & Tribe Jazz Orchestra Nonet
“Journeywoman”
Zenzalai Music Records
2023

This suite, composed by Chicago native Dr. Lenora Zenalai Helm, results from her reflections on a lifelong journey as a black woman. This recording is the culmination of many performances over a 20-year span. She felt that the time was finally right to record “Journeywoman” at this stage of its maturity. The live performances that led to this recording were funded in part by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Featuring Lenora’s stunning vocals, along with a large ensemble, this is an important new work that deserves serious attention (not just a cursory listen!). Along with outstanding musicianship, Dr. Helm is a prominent educator, and is currently the Chair of the Department of Music and Jazz Studies at North Carolina Central University.

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A platform for female authors across the world through our “On The Bookcase” features, showcasing nearly 100 books written by women.



WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BLACK LIVES IN MUSIC

MORE THAN A FEW OF US

Inspired by Willard Jenkins book 'Ain't But A Few of Us', the Women in Jazz Media's new mentoring scheme **More Than A Few of Us** is open for applicants!

Specifically aimed at increasing the number of black jazz journalists across the world and supported by Black Lives in Music, who work to dismantle structural racism in the industry and work to take action to create a level playing field for everyone to have an equal chance to succeed, along with award winning legend Maxine Gordon, the mentoring scheme has significant support, not least of which is through the inspirational mentors who are involved.

More Than A Few of Us is open for applicants!

[To apply, please follow this link](#)

#knockingdownthedoors

**BLACK
LIVES IN
MUSIC**

PHOTO OF CAMILLA GEORGE BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA



CARLA
BLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ENID FARBER

CARLA BLEY: A LEGACY OF HER OWN

Obituary: 11th May 1936- 17th October 2023

by Isabel Marquez

In my time at university, there was one tune that I relied on to help me in whatever study area I found myself in: 'Lawns' by Carla Bley was my happy place, my instant route to tranquillity. With an ethereal, lilting melody and dreamy guitar chords, I was captivated. I went on to write about her life and work in detail in my undergraduate dissertation, presenting her career as a staple for women in jazz looking to steer away from the norm, to explore their endless musical capabilities. Bley passed away in October this year at the age of 87, after being diagnosed with brain cancer in 2018, leaving behind a wonderful career, a legacy of her own.

Carla Bley was known for her expansive musical influence, from the Avant-garde to the world of jazz-rock fusion. She became a distinct figure in modern jazz, with an eclectic compositional repertoire, from her breezier trio and sextet works to her 1971 jazz-rock opera with librettist Paul Haines, 'Escalator on the Hill', with over 50 personnel. Among these contributors were bassists Charlie Haden and Jack Bruce, saxophonist Gato Barbieri, guitarist John McLaughlin, trumpeter Don Cherry, keyboardist Don Preston and vocalist Sheila Jordan.

A pianist, composer, bandleader and overall pioneer in the free jazz movement, Bley was born Lovella May Borg in Oakland, California in 1936. She began playing at a very young age and went on to drop out of school at 14 to work as a pianist in the local jazz clubs. When she turned 17, she moved to

New York and worked as a cigarette girl in the renowned Birdland Jazz Club, absorbing and learning as she went. She went on to marry Paul Bley in 1957, and the couple toured and composed together back in LA, with Bley writing for the likes of Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry.

After splitting with Paul Bley, she married trumpeter Michael Mantler in 1965, which led to the creation of the JCOA label and the New Music Distribution Service, a distributor for experimental music. This sowed the seed for Bley's deep involvement in the free jazz scene, as well as politically charged composition, as seen in her work with the Liberation Music Orchestra (1969) alongside bassist Charlie Haden.

Over the next few years, Bley continued to tour and record with her own bands, such as her self-titled 10-piece big band. She began to immerse herself more in the audacious sounds of 1970s rock, writing music with Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason. Along with founding the JCOA label, Bley and Mantler founded WATT in 1972 and it became her main outlet for most of her works of the late 20th/early 21st century, including 2009's 'Carla's Christmas Carols' with The Partyka Brass Quintet.

Carla Bley had a flair for doing things differently, continuously experimenting and taking on the evolutionary changes in jazz as her own. She has become a



PHOTO BY ENID FARBER

PHOTO BY ENID FARBER



prominent role model for various women in the industry, moulding her own creativity irrespective of genre or social boundaries.

Thank you Carla Bley for everything you've done for women in this musical world. Let us continue to empower fascinating women who change the direction of the jazz scene for the better, for all of us.



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Tony Barnes being celebrated by Hannah Horton and the audience during our London Jazz Festival event. Captured by Monika S Jakubowska



NICHOLA POPE



Photo by Monika S Jakubowska