

Kat Gang - Come Closer (2018)

Written by bluesever

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01. This Can't Be Love 02. The Very Thought Of You 03. Darn That Dream 04. Sentimental Journey 05. Come Closer 06. The Sweet Life 07. How Insensitive 08. I'm Glad There Is You 09. Sometimes I'm Happy 10. People Will Say We're In Love 11. Say It 12. Bella Tristeza
Kat Gang - Vocals Tedd Firth - Piano Phil Palombi - Bass Jay Sawyer - Drums Tony Romano - Guitar + John Sneider aka "Scrapper" - Trumpet

Looking like a page out of Vogue magazine, Kat Gang approaches her music with as much style as she does her appearance. Understated charisma and subtle vocal complexity are watchwords. Gang's phrasing is juuusssst a bit unexpected, elongating and aborting to create fresh rhythm without compromising lyrics. Scat (too rare) verges on words. Expressive arms seem to pump air through her supple torso. By the time she dances in place, we know it's – necessary.

"This Can't Be Love" (Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart) arrives mid-tempo bebop. John Sneider's bright, clean trumpet sound commands the stage...until Gang weighs in, vocally conversing. (They have different opinions.) "Now I Know," a lovely bossa nova (Kat Gang/ Tony Romano) features feather light cymbal, mm-mm bass, caressed piano. Romano almost sings as he plays guitar-his mouth moves much like that of Jay Leonhart. Gang ibues lyrics with shusshh despite never uttering the sound. 'Infectiously warm, sensuous.

"I found a lovely little treat/Bitter turns to sweet/Now that I've got you..." she sings, fingers snapping. ("Now I Know" Kat Gang/Tony Romano) Phil Palombi's bass leads rhythm. His hands rise and descend, fingers seeming to move only from knuckles. Tedd Firth happily wanders the keyboard. "Come Closer" (Kat Gang), the CD's title number, is a blue love song. "You would see if you'd just come closer/I'm alone in my own deep pocket of sorrow..." Trumpet needs a mute (not only on this occasion.) Gang, alas, smiles.

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Classics “Sentimental Journey” (Les Brown/Ben Homer/Bud Green) and “Darn That Dream” (Jimmy Van Heusen/Eddie DeLange) are delivered with the artist’s own stamp. Both are rather seductive. In the second, Gang faces Palombi appreciatively locking eyes. The vocalist slip-slides octaves with breathy skill. Consonants emerge like percussive brushes. As if puppeted by emotion, she leans towards the audience and then Firth. Beautifully crafted.

Just when we’re saturated with feeling, a second, larger wave rolls in. “You Go to My Head” (J. Fred Coots/Haven Gillespie) is simply gorgeous. Firth’s unparalleled piano touch spreads melody like butter. Vocal is pristine. A smidgen of intermittent scat affixes to words like tails. When Gang’s voice intentionally cracks a tad on “crazy” reaction is visceral. The intoxicating number ends leaving whorls of smoke.

Fats Waller’s “Jitterbug Waltz” is out and out fun. Expansive vocal loops, zigs and zags. Piano manifests a hurry-up-and-wait approach. Everyone bounces. Imagine riding a bike with no hands. “Bye Bye Blackbird” (Ray Henderson/ Mort Dixon) follows suit. The declaimed number is tight and winking. Superb scat includes a touch of growl. Gang plays the air like an instrument. ‘Joyous. ---Alix Cohen, theaterpizzazz.com

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