Jane Monheit – The Songbook Sessions: Ella Fitzgerald (2016)

1 All Too Soon 4:02 2 Somebody Loves Me 3:53 3 Chelsea Mood 6:31 4 Something's Gotta Give 4:56 5 I Was Doing All Right / Know You Now 8:02 6 Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye 5:01 7 Where Or When 3:58 8 Ill Wind (You're Blowing Me No Good) 4:11 9 All Of You 4:19 10 I Used To Be Colorblind 3:57 11 I've Got You Under My Skin 5:50 12 This Time The Dream's On Me 4:08 Bass – Neal Miner (tracks: 1 to 11) Drums – Rick Montalbano (tracks: 1 to 11) Harp – Brandee Younger (tracks: 5, 12) Organ – Nicholas Payton (tracks: 11, 12) Percussion – Daniel Sadownick (tracks: 1 to 11) Piano – Michael Kanan (tracks: 1 to 11), Nicholas Payton (tracks: 11) Trumpet – Nicholas Payton (tracks: 1 to 11) Vocals – Jane Monheit

Jazz, like any art, is a rich loam of inspiration and direction. A given contemporary artist has many options for smartly programmed recordings centered on paying tribute. It may be homage to a repertoire, a selected composer, or a particular peer within their own musical neighborhood. Cassandra Wilson's recent Coming Forth By Day (Sony Legacy, 2015) is only one of the most recent such recording addressing the music of Billie Holiday. Holiday has been the focus of many homage recordings. Certainly, she cannot be considered a stylistic black hole robbing equal talent of similar recognition.

Composer and writer Chris Becker, in his book Freedom of Expression: Interviews with Women in Jazz (Beckeresque, 2015) gave a brief history of jazz in general and of women in jazz, in particular. When beginning, to address the singers, he entitled the section, "Lady Day, Ella, and Others..."

Billie Holiday has already been mentioned. But what of Ella Fitzgerald? Becker mentions only her in the same breath as Holiday. That both were giants is beyond question. Do the two compare? Holiday was a firebrand iconoclast with a singing style so unique, she was, like Louis

Armstrong, to influence all vocalist who came after them. Fitzgerald possessed a natural technical ability she honed to a perfection other singers are still chasing. She shares Armstrong with Holiday in that Fitzgerald bettered "scat" singing, setting the bar higher than even its creator. One can scarcely think of jazz singing without either of them.

Gratefully, we are entering a period where the great Ella Fitzgerald and her legacy are beginning to realize their just desserts. There has been a notable spate of recent releases with Ms. Fitzgerald as the focus. One of the first of these recordings is Jane Monheit's Songbook Sessions: Ella Fitzgerald. Monheit re-inaugurates Fitzgerald's own very popular songbook series, those recordings where Fitzgerald featured the likes of Cole Porter, George and Ira Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart, Duke Ellington, and Irving Berlin on a single release, with her own dedication to the "First Lady of Song." A slightly different endeavor than honoring the composer, honoring the interpretive artist is every bit as justifiable if not more so, particularly in the case of a talent as supreme has Fitzgerald's.

Songbook Sessions: Ella Fitzgerald is a tale of two titans, Monheit and Nicholas Payton, who arranged and played trumpet on a majority of the selections. Payton, through is svelte arranging, created an accurate picture of what jazz is supposed to sound like in the near future. Compare the 1960s television show Lost in Space to Ridley Scott's Blade Runner (Warner Brothers, 1982). Lost in Space's vision of the future was foolish hyperbole to the point of being campy. The "futuristic" clothing and technology was overwrought and inaccurate. In Blade Runner, there existed remnants of things that would have been familiar to anyone living 100 years before (Harrison Ford's noir trench coat, fedora, earth tone shirt and tie, for example). Payton's deft touch is similar to that of Scott's in that he makes the songs performed here sound out of the present ordinary while not jettisoning them into unrecognizability.

Monheit's elastic voice is comparable only to that of Betty Carter. A contemporary specialist with the Great American Songbook, Monheit is an aural encyclopedia of singing styles blended into her own vision. In the same way that Payton quotes Sonny Rollin's "Sonnymoon for Two" on "All of You," Monheit quotes the style of Phoebe Snow from 1975's "Poetry Man." There are examples of this synergy between Monheit and Payton throughout this recording. On the lengthy medley "I Was Doing All Right/Know Your Now," Payton quotes "he Girl from Ipanema" and "If I Only Had a Brain" in the same solo phrase. Monheit, for her part, combines the diction of Fitzgerald with the occasional slurred, dragging phrasing of Holiday to approximate Sarah Vaughan in Heaven, all the while sounding like only Monheit can.

The repertoire is classic Ella. Superbly articulated Ellington-Strayhorn, "Chelsea Mood" rubs up against an insistent and sexy "Something's Gotta Give." This performance of "I've Got You

Under My Skin" competes with Beat Kaestli's performance of the same on his 2010 Invitation (Chesky Records) for best original arrangement while Monheit's "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye" is as emotionally wrenching as any song could be sung. Perhaps the best thing about Songbook Sessions: Ella Fitzgerald is the title, one that promised more of the same. And that is good...very good. C. Michael Bailey, allaboutjazz.com

download (mp3 @320 kbs):

yandex mediafire ulozto solidfiles global.files

back