

Vanessa Rubin



Endowed with the kind of liquid phrasing and sheer wisdom that comes from depth of experience on the jazz performance campaign trail, Vanessa Rubin is an ever-evolving classic singer in the making. The development of a true jazz singer is a long-range prospect, laden with learning experiences that forge the voice into a true instrument, rich with passion, deeply invested in living through life's joys and perils; such is the journey of Vanessa Rubin, jazz singer extraordinaire. Capable of employing the gamut of emotions, the mature Ms. Rubin can range from whisper to shout in the blink of an eye; from honey-laden ballads purring like a kitten, to up tempo swinging and scatting like a fluent saxophone, she delivers the goods.

One of the surest tests of a jazz singer is her acceptance by skilled players; the relationship between instrumentalist and vocalist is so often fraught with distrust. Vanessa Rubin has never

experienced such travails. From the time she joined the New York jazz community in the early 80s, under the guidance of such grandmasters as Barry Harris and Frank Foster, Rubin's acceptance has been universal. Instrumentalists have always been impressed by her way around a song, her willingness to flow with their muse, and her innate ability to swing that music.

The list of great musicians who have graced her recordings and bandstands is quite impressive: Monty Alexander, Cecil Bridgewater, Kenny Burrell, Frank Foster, Billy Higgins, Etta Jones, Lewis Nash, Houston Person, Toots Thielemans, Steve Turre, Cedar Walton, Grover Washington, Jr., and James Williams are just a few of the masters who've lent their skills to support Ms. Rubin's artistry. More recently she has completed auspicious global tours with Herbie Hancock, the Woody Herman Orchestra, and the Jazz Crusaders.

The range of material within Vanessa Rubin's broad comfort zone is impressive. It takes conviction and expertise to address the work of composers ranging from Ellington, Gershwin, and Weil to Dizzy Gillespie, Carmen McRae, Wayne Shorter and Sting. But all's well when Vanessa Rubin immerses her pearly tones in such a capacious range of material, not to mention her own considerable pallet of originals.

Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio to parents from Trinidad and Louisiana, Vanessa arrived steeped in great musical traditions. After achieving her Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism from Ohio State University, Rubin taught school for a number of years, all the while with both feet squarely in the jazz lexicon on a path towards a career in music. Along the way she played the regional joints and concerts, dabbled in band management, and continued to hone her skills.

By 1982 the jazz cauldron of New York City beckoned and she wisely knew it was that time. Landing at the Jazz Cultural Theater and the tutelage of Barry Harris and Frank Foster proved a wise move as it led not only to veteran acceptance, but to numerous renowned bandstands. Among those early gigs were stints with the likes of Kenny Barron, Pharoah Sanders, Lionel Hampton, and the Mercer Ellington Orchestra. These and subsequent affiliations are clear evidence that Rubin is not only singer, but a true musician. Ever the pragmatist, she kept a day

job in the New York City school system for a minute, but it was clear that the bandstand would be her ultimate arena.

Clearly Vanessa Rubin's musical skills do not end on the bandstand. She's not only vocalist, lyricist, and composer, she's producer, arranger, savvy in artist & repertoire matters, educator (cited for Outstanding Service to Jazz Education by the International Association of Jazz Educators), music business consultant/facilitator, and music student adjudicator engaged by such auspicious institutions as the Thelonious Monk Institute, Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Kennedy Center. Labeled one of the "Diva Nouvelles" by Essence Magazine, Vanessa Rubin continues on a sure and true sojourn towards mastering her craft.