

THE JW VIBE

Jonathan Widran
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Whether she’s swinging fancifully with some of SoCal’s top jazz musicians or inviting us to experience a deeper intimacy with her richly emotional renderings of some of the Great American Songbook’s most beautiful ballads, Judy Whitmore’s approach to her debut album Isn’t It Romantic has a unique sense of classic and glamorous Hollywood cool about it.

From her charming, breezy romp through “It Could Happen To You” to a sassy, blues-tinged “Hallelujah I Love Him So,” she brings a wealth of fascinating life experiences to every note of 12 songs we’ve heard countless times by the best jazz singers in history yet which suddenly sound completely fresh and newly exciting as she shares them. These include a dreamy, samba tinged “I Remember You,” featuring the

tender flute of Lori Bell; a rousing “Sunday In New York,” talking up the Big Apple over the punchy accents of Rickey Woodard’s sax and Mike Rocha’s trumpet; “The Birth of the Blues,” a torchy yet whimsical vocal harmony duet with Peisha Mcphee; and the infectious sweetness of Dusty Springfield’s late 60’s pop gem “Just a Little Lovin.” Those are all fantastic open doors to ease through on your way to enjoying Whitmore’s musical world.

Perhaps the easiest way to relate the incredible, multi-faceted story leading her to finally bring her magic to a solo recording is to take a direct musical route. Named after Judy Garland, a friend of her grandfather who was a violinist for the MGM Orchestra, she took her first singing lessons at the same time she took dance lessons from Donald O’Connor’s brother. She worked as a backup singer for Capitol Records, then

years later co-founded the musical group Act Three (with her brother Billy and neighbor Lynn) and performed everywhere from The Ritz Hotel in Paris and the Metropolitan Room and Carnegie Hall in NYC.

Grand as these details are, the extracurricular life she draws from to create the lush and subtle sparkles and dynamic expressions on Isn’t It Romantic is even more incredible. When she lived in Aspen, no less than John Denver helped her overcome her fear of flying and she’s been a licensed commercial jet pilot for years – even writing a bestselling novel about her passion called Come Fly With Me (sounds like song that could go on her next album!).

Whitmore is also a Marriage and Family therapist with a masters in clinical psychology; a Board member of Pacific Symphony; and a theater producer. All those endeavors offer great symbolism (i.e. flying, drama, psychological uplift and comfort) that easily applied to the wonderful music she’s making now and will hopefully continue to add to her freewheeling resume in the future.

www.judywhitmore.com

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