Rebecca DuMaine

Rebecca DuMaine trusts songs. A jazz vocalist whose beautiful sound is matched by her exquisite taste, she’s an incisive interpreter of classic American standards who’s steeped in the tradition but not bound by it. With her keen ear for drama and supple sense of phrasing she uncovers new emotional terrain whether exploring familiar fair or the American Songbook’s back pages. Since returning to the San Francisco Bay Area in 2010, she’s emerged as one of the most rewarding song stylists in a region renowned for its brimming pool of jazz vocal talent.

“I’m always trying to find a song that has a lyric that I can make my own,” says DuMaine. “I really love discovering these unmined gems from the American Songbook, songs that aren’t overplayed. And if a song is well known, I love finding an obscure verse or playing it a different way, interpreting a swing tune as a bossa nova, or swinging a ballad.”

Over the past six years DuMaine has released a series of acclaimed albums for Summit Records accompanied by the lithe and indefatigably swinging Dave Miller Trio, starting with 2011’s impressive debut *Deed I Do*. She followed up two years later with *Better Than Anything*, a cohesive collection of songs that, writes *SoundStage*, “always sparkle and often sizzle.” Her release in 2015 was *The Consequence of You*. As Bruce Crowther notes in *Jazz Mostly*, her co-billing with the trio is apt as “this is not a singer with backing group but a quartet of like-minded musicians wholly in tune with one another and with the music they perform.”

DuMaine’s newest release (in October of 2016) is *Happy Madness.*

Joe Lang at Jersey Jazz chimes: “Rebecca DuMaine shows…that she is a lady who can sing and swing…DuMaine has produced four fine vocal albums since signing on with Summit, and the Happy Madness that pervades this one is delightful indeed.”

Miller’s trio was long anchored by renowned bassist Mario Suraci, whose credits range from Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley and Bernadette Peters to Hampton Hawes, Barry Harris, and James Moody. Excellent bassist, Perry Thoorsell, has now taken over the bass chair and brings a new energy to the group. Bill Belasco is a well-traveled veteran possessing a highly musical approach to the drum kit. And Miller is a fine pianist who also happens to be DuMaine’s father.

They’re joined on several *Consequence of You* and *Happy Madness* tracks by the veteran jazz guitarist Brad Buethe, including her rapturous forays into the Brazilian Songbook with Jobim’s “One Note Samba” and Marcos Valle’s “The One That I Love,” “So Nice” and the “This Happy Madness.” A superlative musician who’s recorded with saxophone great Joe Lovano and Headhunters drum legend Mike Clark, Buethe has also become a regular presence on DuMaine’s gigs. Elated by the budding musical relationship, she’s the first to acknowledge that her collaborations with some of the scene’s most respect improvisers has propelled her journey as a jazz artist.

“Brad is such a fantastic musician,” DuMaine says. “He opens up songs and adds such richness. I’m in love with bossa nova, and recording those tunes with him really ignited a desire learn Portuguese and sing in different languages. I just started singing in French, which I’m very comfortable in, and I’ve started building up a repertoire. “Samba Saravah” is featured on *Happy Madness*. My mom’s a French teacher, and I lived in France.”

While her mother helped turn her into a Francophile, DuMaine’s father filled her consciousness with jazz. She grew up listening to her father play the piano every day and night, falling asleep to the sounds of George Shearing and Bill Evans arrangements. Delighted and comforted by the music, she forged a deep emotional connection to jazz, with a particular affinity for the American Songbook as rendered by definitive singers like Ella Fitzgerald, Nat “King” Cole, and Nancy Wilson. But while jazz music was a deep love, it wasn’t something she thought about pursuing professionally.

After graduating from Duke University with a drama degree she moved to New York City and spent years working in regional theater, performing in numerous Shakespeare festivals. At the same time, she started training fellow thespians in a vocal technique developed by Kristen Linklater designed to free an actor’s natural voice. DuMaine was in the midst of a successful practice, teaching at the Actor’s Studio, when an interest in jazz started simmering during her pregnancy with her first child. After making her debut as a singer with the Dave Miller Trio at a gig on Ellis Island, she began seeking out opportunities to perform, while honing a sensibility inspired by deceptively unadorned jazz singers like Irene Kral, Blossom Dearie, and Peggy Lee.

Seeking to be closer to California family and seizing the opportunity to launch a new creative adventure, DuMaine, her husband and their two children moved to the Bay Area in 2010, near where she grew up. She studied with vocal masters Mad Eastman and Kitty Margolis and attended the Stanford Jazz Workshop while learning on-the-job at restaurant gigs. After a while she and the Miller Trio found a regular home at the stylish supper club Angelica’s in Redwood City and an eloquent champion in the late jazz critic and educator Dr. Herb Wong.

“Kitty helped teach me how to improvise and take risks,” DuMaine says. “She was very big on interpreting the lyric, and I bonded with her on that. Madeline really concentrated on finding what you have to say as an artist, and she’s continued to be a force in my life. Both of them have been really helpful in terms of learning how become a bandleader and not just a singer.”

Like the best artists, DuMaine continues to grow with each new creative encounter. Her emergence as an enthralling jazz singer isn’t a repudiation of her theatrical background. Rather, it’s a homecoming informed by her background in acting and voice, a marriage of her gift for storytelling with her sensuous musicality. Considering the transformative power of her passion for jazz, it’s not surprising that “all of these paths, voice training and acting, fed into this new thing around the time I was pregnant, the most visceral, primal experience,” she says. “I believe in my soul that this is what I’ll be doing.” Listening to DuMaine, there’s no doubt that she’s found her calling.

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