# christy baron steppin'

CHESKY RECORDS

When jazz singers interpret popular music, their main source is often the great standards and Broadway music of the 1920's, 1930's and 1940's. Turning most of their attention to George and Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin and other famous composers of that era, they tend to ignore the rock and R&B songs of the last 40 years, assuming they are irrelevant to jazz singing. Yet worthwhile popular music didn't die with the Gershwin Brothers -- great popular songs continue to be written, and on her second Chesky album, *Steppin'*, Christy Baron demonstrates that the popular music of the 1960's, 1970's, 1980's and 1990's can, in fact, be relevant to a jazzoriented vocalist.

This album's primary focus is what Baron calls "modern standards" or "new standards:" from The Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows," Peter Gabriel's "Mercy Street" and Phil Collins' "This Must Be Love" to Prince's "Thieves In The Temple" and The Atlanta Rhythm Section's "Spooky." Pianist/keyboardist Herbie Hancock was thinking along similar lines when he recorded the instrumental Main Ingredient for Verve in the late 1990's, and Steppin' was being planned coincidentally around the same time.

"To me, standards aren't called standards because they're from a certain era," asserts the Pittsburgh-raised singer, who now lives in New York. "They're standards because they're songs that people listen to and enjoy on a regular basis. They're the popular songs of their day."

To some jazz purists, songs by The Beatles, Peter Gabriel and the innovator formerly known as Prince should be off limits to jazz improvisors. But truth be told, Baron interpreting their songs in the year 2000 is as logical as Ella Fitzgerald or Helen Merrill interpreting Rodgers & Hart in the 1950's--and make no mistake: interpreting the songs is exactly what she does. If you're looking for predictable, note-for-note covers of rock and R&B favorites, you won't find them here.

Originally an uptempo soul number in the early 1970's, Billy Preston's "Will It Go Round In Circles" becomes moody jazz-noir in Baron's hands. And while The Zombies' "She's Not There" was originally a British Invasion rock hit in the 1960's, Baron puts a very funky, R&B-minded spin on the song.

"I wasn't trying to improve any of these songs or make them better -- I just wanted to give you my take on them," Baron notes. "My interpretation of 'She's Not There' changes the whole perspective of the song. When The Zombies recorded it, 'She's Not There' was done from a guy's perspective. But my version is a woman telling a guy, 'Get it together -she's not around, but I'm here. Get over it."

Steppin' will come as a surprise to those whose introduction to Baron was her recording debut of 1996, *1 Thought* About You. While that Cliff Korman-produced effort wasn't without R&B and pop elements and found Baron interpreting The Beatles' "Got To Get You Into My Life," Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine" and Stevie Wonder's "Summer Soft," it was acoustic-oriented and employed a basic piano trio.

"On Steppin' we wanted to do something different," says David Chesky, "so I asked Didier Rachou to take a few chances and produce something new." Producer Didier Rachou is more contemporary in his approach, mixing jazz, world music and cutting-edge electronica styles.

Baron will be the first to tell you that *Steppin'* is far from the work of a hard bop purist. This is a jazz-oriented album, but it's a jazz-oriented album that is quite mindful of pop, R&B, and electronica, as well as world music. "Tomorrow Never Knows" incorporates traditional Tuvan throat singing, and one hears traces of Indian music on "Mercy Street."

"I have never claimed to be a jazz purist or a straightahead singer," asserts Baron. "I'm definitely more contemporary-minded, and I embrace music from different eras. I can't help being influenced by the many different styles of music that I have loved during my life."

Indeed, parts of the album are funky enough to attract R&Baudiences -- it's easy to imagine Erykah Badu or N'Dea Davenport fans getting into Baron's makeover of "She's Not There" or her hypnotic interpretation of Heatwave's 1977 funk smash "Ain't No Half Steppin'."

The hip-hop vibe is especially strong on "Nite And Day"

and "Delays On The Downtown 6," the two original songs on the album, both written by Didier Rachou and Lucy Lean. "Delays" is a jazz/hip-hop poem that features David Johansen of New York Dolls and Buster Poindexter fame. The piece is a vivid collage of contrasting Manhattan vignettes.

"If Miles Davis were alive today," Baron comments, "he'd be continuing to grow and challenge himself. He had to do his own thing, which is why he was an inspiration to so many artists. It's important for artists to express what they honestly feel--and with this album, I was able to incorporate many of the styles that I love and use them to make a personal statement."

-- Alex Henderson March 2000

Alex Henderson is a Philadelphia-based journalist whose work has appeared in Billboard, Spin, Pulsel, JazzTimes, Jazziz, The All Music Guide, CD Review, HITS and countless other publications.

# 1. Will It Go 'Round In Circles

(Bruce Fisher, William Preston) - Almo/Irving Music Inc. [BMI] Dan Zah - Yano John Hebert - Acoustic Bass Zach Danziger - Cymbals Gildd - Percussion Didfer Rachou - Drum Programming and Acoustic Guitar

#### 2. Mercy Street

(Peter Gabriel) - Pentagon Lipservices / Real World (BMI) Dan Tahk - Piano John Hebert - Acoustic Bass Zach Danziger - Drums Gilad - Percussion Didler Rachow - Drum Programming and Electric Guitar

#### 3. Tomorrow Never Knows

(John Lennon, Paul McCartney) • Sony /ATV Songs LLC (BMI) Akin Frank Buddah - Turan Threat Singing Chris Roges - Turanget John Hebert - Acoustic Bass Zach Danziger - Oymbals Gilda - Percussion Effects (Intro Only) Didfer Rachou - Sampler, Drum and Percussion Programming; Guitars

#### 4. Thieves In The Temple

(Prince Ropers Helson) • VB Music Corp. c/o Warner Chappell Music Inc. [ASCAP] Violin 1 - Pauline Kim Violin 2 - Georgy Valtchev Viola - Ariel Rudiakov Cello - Dave Epgar Unitos Mafalides - Vibes John Helert - Acoustic Bass Zach Danziger - Opmbals Didier Rachoa: Percession and Drum Programming

#### 5. This Must Be Love

(Phil Collins) - EMI April Noise / o EMI Music Publishing Inc. (ASCAP) Doriane Elliott - Background Yocals Duane Martin Foster - Background Yocals William Galison - Chromatic Harmonica Dan Ane, Piano John Hebert - Acoustic Bass Zach Daniger - Drums Gilad - Percussion

# 6. Delays On The Downtown 6

(Uprics: Lucy Lean - Music: Differ Rachon) + Proto-Pygny (ASCAP) Chesky Productions (ASCAP) Denid Johanses - Spoten Nord Andy Middleton - Soprano San John Hebert - Konstille Bass Zach Banziger - Cymbols Gilad - Percussion Dider Rachon - Sampler and Pro Tools

### 7. She's Not There

(Rod Arent) - Parker Music (Jo Fantasy Inc. (BMI) Doriane Elliott - Background Yocals Duane Martin Foster - Background Yocals Andy Middeton - Flute Dan Zank-Piano John Hebert - Acoustic Bass Zach Baniger - Drums Jeff Harves - Perussion

#### 8. The Shadow Of Your Smile

(John Mande, Paul Francis Websto) - EM Miller Catalog Inc. c/o EM Music Publishing Inc. (LSCAP) - Marissa Music (LSCAP) Any Middleto - Soyran Sax Dan Zahi - Piano John Hebert - Koustic Bass Zach Danziger - Drums Gildd - Percession

#### 9. Is Love Enough

(George Duke) • Mycenae Music Publishing Co. [ASCAP] William Galison - Harmonica John Hebert - Acoustic Bass Gilad - Percussion Didier Rachou - Conga Programming and Acoustic Guitar

#### 10. Ain't No Half Steppin'

(Rod Temperton) - Rod Songs c/o Mannat, Phelps & Philips (ASCAP) Chris Rogers - Trumpet Dan Zank - Pian John Hebert - Acoustic Bass Zach Daniger - Cymbals Didfer Rakou - Dymaid Programming

#### n. Spooky

(Buddy Buie, James B. Cobb Jr., Harry Middlebrooks, Mike Shapiro) Lonery Missic Company Inc. (BMI) Christos Fatalidae: Yoles John Hebert - Acoustic Bass Zach Banziger - Cymbals Gilad - Percession Didfer Rachou - Hellotton, Drum and Conga Programming, Nylon String Guitar

# 12. Nite And Day

(Lyrics: Lucy Lean - Music: Didier Rachou) + Proto-Pygmy (ASCAP) Chesky Productions (ASCAP) Curits King - Yozals Chris Rogers- Trumpet Zach Banigar - Cymbals Gildar - Parcussio Didier Rachou - Sampler and Pro Tools Producers: Executive Producer: Recording Engineer: Assistant Producer: Second Engineer / Prod. Coordinator: Editing & Mastering Engineer: Recording Assistant: Session Assistants: Piano Technician:

Production Manager: Artist Development: Art Director: Photography:

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Didier Rachou and David Chesky Norman Chesky Barry Wolifson Steve Guttenberg Sandy Palmer Grassi Nicholas Prout Rick Eckerle Elaine Musselman and Peter Volpe Tom Sheehan

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