

Exclusive
Interview With :

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ROBIN MCKELLE

Tell everyone who you are and what you do.

I'm a jazz/soul vocalist from Rochester, NY now living in Paris. I have recorded 9 full length albums and 1 Christmas EP :) My latest album, *Impressions of Ella*, includes some of my favorite's tunes performed by Ella Fitzgerald and features Kenny Barron on piano.

Can you share a bit about your musical background and how you first discovered your passion for jazz and soul music?

I grew up in a very musical home, my mother is also a singer and musician. I studied piano from the age of 5 and was on stage singing in musicals from the age of 8. I always knew I was going to have a career as a singer, but I just had to figure out what path I would take. In high school I studied classical voice and musical theater but, on the weekends, I was performing at a party band where I would sing anything from Janis Joplin to Aretha Franklin.

I loved R&B and soul music and I felt torn between 2 different worlds. I was introduced to Jazz by playing piano in the jazz band. This was where I first heard Ella Fitzgerald amongst other singers. I like the density of the chords and I was excited to find out I could study jazz and make that my focus in college.

So, I was off to University Miami to begin my jazz studies adventure. I ended up transferring to Berklee College of Music where I finished my degree in Professional Music. From there I moved to LA where I toured as a backing vocalist for a few years but quickly I realized I wanted to be out front and pursued my solo artist career!

Let's talk about your new album "Impressions of Ella" and the motivation behind the song.

The motivation behind my album, "Impressions of Ella" was to return back to my jazz roots after doing several different style projects. I wanted to get back to the repertoire that began my career and by choosing the music of Ella, I was able to reconnect with the classic jazz standards but with a different inspiration. After having some time away from traditional jazz I felt I was able to interpret the music with so much more life experience.



How do you feel your music has evolved over the course of your career, and what factors have contributed to that evolution?

I am always trying to find new ways to express myself through my music. I feel that it's important to push myself outside of my comfort zone even though sometimes I'm so resistant to it. I always strive to be a better singer, songwriter and performer. I don't think it's good to be complacent. Trying different sounds/ styles along with different combinations of musicians helps to keep things fresh and also pushes me and inspires me differently.

What is one of the most memorable moments you've had in your career?

I'm so fortunate to have had a long and successful career and so many amazing moments. Performing a duet with Bobby

McFerrin, opening up for BB King in Paris, recording with Kenny Barron and singing with soul legend, Bobby Rush. But some of the most memorable moments for me are when my parents were able to be present. Most recently I played 4 sold out shows at Birdland in NYC and my parents were able to be there so it was very special.

What is one fun fact about yourself?

I love to cook and create good cocktails!

Are there any upcoming albums, collaborations, or performances on the horizon?

Yes!! I am writing music now and will be recording a new jazz trio album of originals soon! In March, I'll be performing the first of many symphonic orchestra performances featuring the music from *Impressions of Ella* in Germany.

If you could perform anywhere in the world, where would it be?

I would have to say The Apollo because of all the history there and because one of my favorite albums ever was recorded live there! "James Brown, live at the Apollo".

Where can the readers follow and engage with you?

I have a mailing list that you can sign up for at my site www.robinmckelle.com and of course I'm on Instagram: @robinmckelle and @RobinMcKelleMusic

