



*ROBIN McKELLE: Impressions of Ella (Believe/Naïve)*

Versatile US vocalist ROBIN McKELLE is maybe best known in the UK for her still marvellous song, 'Fairytale Ending'. It first appeared on her 'Soul Flower' album and when it was released as a stand alone 7" vinyl single on Expansion it became something of a modern soul favourite. That was back in 2012 and since then Robin has released lots more music across all kinds of genres – more soul (remember 'Heart Of Memphis?'), country and Americana amongst them but for her brand new long player Ms McKelle returns to where she started in the business – jazz. Her first forays into the world of recording were with jazz albums and now she returns to that genre – though with a very particular focus. As the above title suggests, Robin's new record is an unashamed tribute to the art of Ella Fitzgerald... a singer whom Robin has often cited as her greatest influence.

Ms McKelle says: "The concept of the music of Ella came about because she was my first introduction to vocal jazz. I learned so much from her singing — the style of her swing feel and her singing resonates [with] me." Consequently, Robin has chosen 11 songs forever associated with Ella and to help her deliver her "impressions" she's helped out by a stellar trio – Kenny Washington on drums, bassist Peter Washington, and NEA Jazz Master Kenny Barron on piano. McKelle again: "I wasn't intimidated to make music with them, but [their] résumés were like, 'Wow!' [Am I] going to be good enough? Are we going to connect? The exciting thing was having the opportunity to sing over them as a trio; that was such a huge joy." And joy is evident right through the album. Singer and band gel and deliver with an optimism that only comes from players who just love to make the music they love.

The repertoire consists of plenty of well-known jazz standards (most given their definitive reading by Ms Fitzgerald). So enjoy 21st century takes on favourites like 'Old Devil Moon', 'Lush Life', 'Taking A Chance On Love' and 'April In Paris' but also listen up to new takes on lesser known items like the gentle 'Soon' and an obscure 1947 song, 'Robbins Nest'. How could Robin McKelle ignore that one? And what a splendid job she makes of it – full on scat in the best Ella Fitzgerald fashion. Indeed throughout the album, Robin's not overawed by the material or the iconic status of the singer she's paying homage to. What an odyssey she's been on since the late 1990s! 'Impressions of Ella' is Robin McKelle's coming of age album. Her years of performing and recording now bear a generous, mature fruit.

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