

LIBBY YORK

BIOGRAPHY

“A jazz singer of cool composure and artful subtlety” **New York Times**

“Her wit and easy swing” **The New Yorker**

LIBBY YORK is not the kind of jazz singer that needs vocal pyrotechnics to engage an audience. Whether she is singing a ballad or swinging hard on a standard, her deep connection to the lyrics and subtle improvisations on the melody convey an intimacy that makes each song feel like she is telling a story about her own life. On DREAMLAND, York’s newest recording, she once again plies her rich, expressive voice to a set of mostly lesser-known standards that highlight her ability to cut to the emotional core of a song.

DREAMLAND is York’s fifth CD as a leader and producer. The album follows *Memoir* (2014), *Here with You* (2008), *Sunday in New York* (2003), and *Blue Gardenia* (1999). Her performances and recordings have garnered raves from the international jazz press. *DownBeat Magazine* gave *Sunday in New York* four stars and said, “Stylish and cosmopolitan with a broad streak of lush life urbanity, Libby York has a sound that recalls, without any condescension or gratuitous nostalgia, the slightly world weary, been-around-the-block ennui of post-war Anita O’Day, Chris Connor and Sarah Vaughan.”

York has enchanted audiences at venues such as Mezzrow, Jazz Forum The Kitano, Waldorf Astoria and Metropolitan Room New York City, Green Mill, Jazz Showcase, Winter’s Jazz Club Chicago, venues in Los Angeles, the Netherlands, Vancouver BC and Cafe Laurent, Paris.

It’s rare for Adam Gopnik, *The New Yorker* contributor and author (*Paris to The Moon*, *Through the Children’s Gate*), to write liner notes. But he was so taken by York’s voice and style that he offered to write them for York’s *Here with You*. Gopnik enthuses: “...the miracle of jazz singing as good as this, is that a voice’s encounter with words manages not only to produce the emotion the songwriters put in but add another new emotion of the singer’s own. Cool jazz singers Anita O’Day, Chris Connor, June Christy and Julie London are subtle influences on York, but her voice is unique, with a rich, warm tone not often found. She mentions Rosemary Clooney’s comment “I’m a singer of fine songs who works with jazz musicians” as resonating with her approach. In live performance she is a true jazz singer who improvises with her phrasing and swings hard. “The in-the-moment interaction with my band members is such joy!

York is also an astute record producer and a favorite with many top jazz musicians. Over a 40-year career, she has recorded and performed around the country and around the world with jazz luminaries like John Di Martino, Warren Vaché, Russell Malone, Frank Wess, Billy Drummond, Howard Alden and many more.

Although York has been performing since 1980, her recording career did not come about overnight. Her early influences include singer/guitarist Frank D'Rone and the great June Christy's "Something Cool" album. She left Chicago in the early 70s to major in political science at American University in Washington, DC and opened a restaurant, The Back Porch Cafe in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware in 1974, which is still thriving. She spent most of the 80s and early 90s in New York where she was featured vocalist with Swing Street, an eight-piece big band, and was coached by the great Abbey Lincoln. She currently spends her time in Chicago, New York, Paris, and Key West.

Her debut album, Blue Gardenia, was released on the Southport label. It was followed in by her breakthrough recording Sunday in New York, a Blujazz release that boasted Renee Rosnes on piano and Count Basie alumni Frank Wess on tenor sax. The album received an abundance of rave reviews including 4 stars in Downbeat Magazine. In JazzTimes, Christopher Loudon described Sunday in New York as "a delectable all-standards program" and praised York's "tremendous Anita O'Day appeal" as well as her "bravura dexterity." Jazz Review's John Gilbert called York "a master vocalist with a deep well of talent at her disposal," and in All About Jazz, Dr. Judith Schlesinger asserted: "York is relaxed, subtle, and infinitely tender, especially on the ballads... you can hear the smile in her voice." Sunday in New York's liner notes were by the renowned Chicago-based jazz critic and radio personality, Neil Tesser, who wrote: "York finds the complicated emotional center of a lyric and sets it out with disarming simplicity."

A top-notch bandleader and record producer, York is one of the finest storytellers and singers on the scene today. While her cool style is reminiscent of past legends like Peggy Lee and June Christy, Libby York's conversational style, hip phrasing, superb sense of time, and deep connection to a song's lyrics, show that the art of masterful storytelling is alive and well in the 21st century.

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