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Rene Marie - Black Lace Freudian Slip - All About Jazz CD Review

Rene Marie (Motéma Music)

By Dan Bilawsky

Budding jazz instrumentalists are often told that they need to find their own voice but, ironically, those who use their actual voices are often expected to adhere to the sonic standards of those who came before. Fans and press who value originality in jazz instrumentalists wring their hands in frustration when more John Coltrane clones come into the picture but, on the other side of the coin, the masses applaud and herald singers with voices crafted in the images of jazz icons (e.g. Madeleine Peyroux's Billie Holiday-like voice), creating a double standard that does a disservice to those singers who don't fall in line.

While the ability to interpret songs from The Great American Songbook, and understand and borrow musical mannerisms from notable artists, has undeniable merit, vocalists like the one and only Rene Marie deserve to be measured for their originality in voice, spirit and song. Marie's steadfast commitment to her own vision of music has won her wide acclaim for a string of fine recordings, and placed her in controversial situations, as with her "Lift Every Voice" rewrite of "The Star Spangled Banner," but she always remains confident in her artistic decisions, never letting populist ideals or the changing winds of the music industry sway her from her chosen path.

Black Lace Freudian Slip comes closely on the heels of Marie's personally patriotic *Voice Of My*



Beautiful Country (Motéma, 2011), but the focus is now on Marie-as-composer. Ten of the thirteen tracks on this album are Marie originals and, while her honesty and spirit shine through in each and every performance, she touches on various themes and styles throughout.

"Black Lace Freudian Slip" is a study in contrasts, as Marie uses a sensuous delivery that shows off her feminine wiles, while also infusing her vocals with the type of boastful braggadocio usually reserved for male rappers, but that's only one side of this complex individual. Elsewhere, she touches on a folk-country hybrid that leans toward the sound of Ray LaMontagne ("Wishes"), boisterous pseudo-samba ("Rufast Daliarg"), stunning, soulful displays of vocal intensity ("Deep In The Mountains"), and music with earthy bass and tom grooves that wear textural designs often found in the work of Cassandra Wilson ("Ahn's Dream"). While Marie rails against the notion of people comparing her to other famous voices--like Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan--during her aural response to a club owner who told her that jazz singers should interpret rather than write ("This For Joe"), it's hard not to notice a Nancy Wilson-like zeal in her voice on the waltzing "Free For A Day." Here, and on her ode to a drummer's accent ("Rim Shot"), Marie is at her most lighthearted.

With so many different styles and sounds coming in and out of the mix, *Black Lace Freudian Slip* doesn't really come off as a statement from a jazz singer. Instead, it arrives as a musical gift from one of the most arresting and complex vocal personalities performing today.

Track Listing: Black Lace Freudian Slip; This For Joe; Wishes; Thanks, But I Don't Dance; Free For A Day; Ahn's Dream; Gosh, Look At The Time; Rim Shot; Fallin' Off A Log; Deep In The Mountains; Serenity Prayer; Rufast Daliarg; Tired.

Personnel: Rene Marie: vocals; Kevin Bales: piano; Rodney Jordan: bass; Quentin Baxter: drums; Bill Kepper: acoustic guitar (3); Lionel Young: electric guitar, fiddle (10); Dexter Payne: harmonica (3); Michael A. Croan: vocals (10).

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