

Jazz vocalists' pop range includes ... Aerosmith

CONCERT PREVIEW

Cara Matthew

With: Her touring trio (pianist Attila Fias, bassist Kodi Hutchinson, drummer Richard Brisco)

When: Tonight at 9
Where: Jeffrey's Cafe & Wine Bar, 9640 142nd St.

Cost: \$15 cover; reservations are suggested (780-451-8890)

ROGER LEVESQUE *Special to The Journal* EDMONTON

Cara Matthew isn't the first jazz singer to take on contemporary pop tunes, but on the recent debut disc *Make You Feel My Love* (Awesome/EMI) this Vancouver-born/Toronto resident goes further than most.

Imagine covers of Aerosmith (*Pink What It Takes*), Elton John and Bernie Taupin's *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, Billy Joel's *She's Always a Woman*, Billy Preston's *Nothing From Nothing*, and the title Bob Dylan tune alongside more typical songwriters such as Burt Bacharach, Joni Mitchell and Randy Newman.

The novel part is how Matthew and her trio (including ex-Edmonton bassist George Koller) bring jazz phrasing and inventive arrange-

ments to such unexpected material along with the standards fare she also sings.

We caught up with Matthew at the start of her first 17-date national tour, which includes a return visit tonight to Jeffrey's Cafe & Wine Bar on (she sold out two nights there last spring).

Q: What drew you to singing jazz in the first place?

A: I grew up in a musical family. Then in high school I had some amazing choral directors and teachers who inspired me, and that's also when I got introduced to jazz. I had classical vocal training for years before I got some jazz training in high school. There's just something about how I feel when I sing jazz. That's where the moment is for me. Jazz lets me feel who I am.

Q: So you began pursuing a musical career following high school?

A: I sang in all sorts of shows over the summers, but I didn't get into music as a career until after I did an undergrad degree at UBC, majoring in English and sociology. The musical focus really got going once I moved to Toronto three years ago and met the phenomenal players that I work with. My piano player Robi Botos told me, "Just listen to the greats, that's your best teacher." Dinan Washington was a huge influ-



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ence, and Diana Krall as well.

Q: How prepared were you going into this recording?

A: It took me a few months to find a great producer, but I finally met Greg Kavanagh (a Juno Award-winning producer who has worked with David Foster, Aretha Franklin,

Jennifer Warnes and Chrissie Hynde, among others).

Before this album I was singing all standards and a few Aretha Franklin tunes. But I wanted to take songs that I love, songs that I listened to growing up, and turn them into jazz and blues and interpret them the way I wanted to sing them.

I can't sing Aerosmith songs like Steven Tyler, but I can sing them like me, in my bluesy interpretation. Greg was on board with that, and the players we used were so amazing. We gave them a lot of freedom to get involved in creating the arrangements as well.

Q: It's pretty unusual for Aerosmith tunes to show up on a jazz record.

A: I guess I was hearing something that I could make my own, especially on *Pink*. It's a very sensual, fun song you can play with a lot. George created a bass solo to open it and it turned out to centre things beautifully.

Q: Some of the tunes, like *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, are so well-known. Was it intimidating to try and find something fresh in them?

A: I loved singing these songs, so even if someone says, "That kind of sounds like the original," it doesn't impact me because I'm singing it the way I feel it. A lot of responses came from people who say, "I didn't even know it was that song," and that's

what I love. It's about really living the lyrics, making sure that words can be understood and it's a story with them.

Q: As a jazz singer doing pop, what audience are you shooting for?

A: It could be very wide. Some people who don't like jazz at all still like this. I'm hoping it caters a lot of different ages and niches

More live jazz

► Pianist Benny Green and guitarist John Stowell have both played Edmonton before, but never together. The Portland-based duo continue tonight at 9 at the Yardbird Station. Tickets are \$20 for members, for guests.

► The Yardbird hosts another All-nadian Jazz Festival Nov. 6-14, featuring acts like Vancouver's Inhabited Toronto's Ernesto Cervini Qua and Montreal's Yves Leveille Se among others (see www.yardbirdsuite.com).

► Another series of Sunday afternoon Jazz and Reflections concert starts next weekend at Ritchie Urquhart (9624 74th Ave., from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.). Rollanda Lee and Canadian Hot Stars perform Oct. 25. Charlie Austin Trio Oct. 25. Dave Ickcock Trio Nov. 1. Chris Andrew Nov. 8, and P.J. Perry Nov. 15.