

Interview with Laura Ainsworth

By Mari Ochiai

Jazz Japan Vol.133 (September 2021), p.14-15



Laura Ainsworth, a retro jazz diva from Dallas, Texas, will finally release a Japanese CD version of her compilation album *Top Shelf*, which was originally released only with the LP version in 2017. (*The digital version of her three albums and the two compilation albums including her song are also released at the same time). Six new songs have been added, the track sequence has been reconstructed with the high-quality remastering. This album is new and has somewhat nostalgic Laura-style "New Vintage" with a refinement. Laura, who celebrates the 10th anniversary of her debut, has been outstanding in the retro jazz circle, told us about her own characteristics and her plans for the future.

"I always wished we'd had room for several more of my favorites on a CD since space is at a premium on vinyl. I'm happy that we could include other favorites such as Irving Berlin's "You'd Be Surprised". My sound is out of the current music scene, and has romance and class, real wit and casual sophistication, just like Ella or Nat "King" Cole had. I want my voice to evoke the great time of jazz in 1920s–1950s, and I love that my music could be a part of that nostalgic time."

The CD was remastered by Grammy nominee engineer Jessica Thompson, and will be released with Japanese biography, liner notes, and lyrics that makes it a great specification for Japanese fans.

“The CD edition was a pretty big production that has taken years. We had an outside producer, got the CD a new track sequencing and a new booklet design. I was very fortunate to have Jessica. We went over the master 14 times and I’ve learned a CD really can have the warm sound of vinyl. Also, we got everything right such as the special obi, according to Japanese quality standards.”

Laura is now one of the most loved divas in the retro-jazz genre. She had been listening to the singing voices of jazz giants such as Ella, Frank Sinatra, and Mel Tormé with her father Billy Ainsworth who was a saxophonist and clarinetist since she was a child. It seems that the environment gave her a great upbringing.

“It means so much to me that retro-jazz lovers appreciate and root for what I do, since I was hearing those giants’ voices when I was a baby! I listened to Peggy Lee’s Christmas songs a lot, and I heard plenty of Ella, Sinatra, and Mel Tormé as a lullaby all the time. Also, my dad’s playing developed my ear.”

Laura keeps her "New Vintage" style whereas inheriting the jazz tradition. What exactly motivates her?

“Music’s ability is not just to express emotion, but to trigger it, within me. I keep trying to understand what an amazing power it is, to be able to move a person so much, and how that works. I’m just “wired” to react very strongly to music, I guess. I’m actually afraid to try to sing certain songs, which touch me so deeply and make me cry. What motivates me the most is the idea of leaving a little part of myself behind immortally. I’m hoping someone listens to a record of mine a hundred years from now, as the way I’ve done.”

She wants to vitalize her activities in Japan in the future. She actually has a lot of plans such as the simultaneous digital releases of her three past albums *Keep It To Yourself*, *Necessary Evil*, and *New Vintage* and the production of her next album *You Asked For It* that will be a collection of fan requests.

“It will be something different. There are more standards than usual, and the recording was more casual, with the full band playing together live in the studio just like Julie London’s *Julie At Home* that has a feeling like a private party where musicians relax and play. That should be available in Japan in February, and only as a download in the US. It will be special for my Japanese fans, so I hope they like it!”

Media Contact: David Gasten, Swing City Productions

6129 Fountain Ave No. 5, Los Angeles, CA 90028 USA (+1) 323-499-1805 swingcityproductions@gmail.com