

One Song

by Katie Bull

There's often no better place to make some sense of our crazy world than in the music. As listeners we lose ourselves in songs, only to feel a renewed sense of connection to life. This month the shorter days and darker starry nights of the season just got brighter with the bounty of jazz singers who will spread their illumination, lighting the way for our personal and collective change.

Big Band Holidays featuring the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis and **Cécile McLorin Salvant** (Dec. 12th-14th) at Rose Hall is sure to be a night to commune around the jazz 'fire'. Monk Vocal Competition award winner Salvant simply can't be touted enough; everyone should hear her extraordinarily expansive range of expression and feel her stage presence as it radiates in all directions.

At the Apollo Theater, Duke Ellington's *Nutcracker Suite* with the David Berger Big Band and Abyssinian Baptist Church Choir will feature the gospel and R&B-influenced voice of jazz vocalist **Lizz Wright**, alongside Metropolitan opera soprano Priscilla Baskerville and tap dancer Savion Glover (Dec. 7th). Wright sings with movingly gutsy simplicity. She has a masterful ability to go inward and sing from a quiet yet combusive

center.

At Dizzy's Club, the spirit of the season will be in full intensity: look out for the vivacious and downright powerful blues edged **Brianna Thomas** (Dec. 4th), who will be featured in a holiday show, and the double-threat singer/trumpeter **Bria Skonberg**, 2013 *DownBeat* Rising Star, will smoke the stage with her strongly supported and dexterous voice (Dec. 5th). Also at Dizzy's Club, the Duduka Da Fonseca/Helio Alves Jazz Samba Christmas will feature renowned Brazilian vocalist **Maucha Adnet**. She can rouse pure joy and should not be missed, particularly if you are a Latin jazz fan (Dec. 20th-23rd).

Speaking of Brazil, American-born and London-based jazz diva **Stacey Kent** will sing at Birdland (Dec. 3rd-7th) from *The Changing Lights* (Blue Note), a life-affirming album with the authentic soul of Brazil pulsing in her buoyant clarion tone.

For a more experimental journey hear the Kettle Collective - vocalists **Andrea Wolper** and **Maryanne de Prophetis** along with guitarist Gene Ess, bass guitarist Jochem Van Dijk and pianist Connie Crothers - at Ibeam Brooklyn (Dec. 20th). Wolper and de Prophetis are respected vocalists rooted in tradition, who skillfully improvise in their own unique vocabularies.

In the CD world two releases in particular are a celebration of jazz legacy. The world premiere of the never-before-released stand-alone version of **Tony Bennett's** *Live at the Sahara: Las Vegas 1964* (Columbia

Legacy) is a swinging sure thing. And the Verse Music reissue of **Nina Simone's** *Little Girl Blue* (Bethlehem) will make your jaw drop. It captures the brilliance of Simone's virtuosic piano playing, integration of Bach influences and deep younger voice (she was 25). With the heart and phrasing of an old soul, this album is perfection incarnate.

Jumping forward to the future of jazz, Polish vocalist **Grzegorz Karnas** releases one of the most engaging experimental vocal jazz albums in years, *Audio Bead* (Budapest Music Center). Karnas' textured baritone is both gritty and cleanly smooth. A passionate and driving leader, who we will be hearing a lot about in the coming years, Karnas shapeshifts with all the instruments in his trio.

And speaking of what's coming, when he finally hits the American shoreline, one of the greatest jazz singers in Europe will surely be welcomed with tremendously open arms. Until then, we can celebrate Swiss vocalist **Andreas Schaerer's** *At the Age of Six I wanted to Be A Cook* (Jazzwerkstatt Wien), his most recent release. Schaerer's voice, Peter Rom's guitar and Martin Eberle's trumpet weave elements of Swing, African music, blues and even hip-hop edges into an entirely unpredictable and engaging avant-groove like nothing you've heard before.

We are living in some crazy times: NSA, GMO, CO2, OMG - it's overwhelming. A better world can be sung into existence, one song at a time. ❖