

## Heather Bambrick: You'll Never Know

By *Raul da Gama* - Apr 3, 2017

Anyone who begins a disc with "I Only Have Eyes for You" is bound to capture at least one reviewer's attention. But Heather Bambrick, who gives thirteen other perfectly sung songs after that, does something else: she takes the breath away. Bambrick has already captivated a legion of fans with her *Sunday Afternoon Jazz* (which began life with the proverbially effervescent title, *Sing! Sing! Sing!*) and *Jazzology*, on Toronto's own Jazz FM 91.1 - Jazz and the Arts. With her characteristic 'madcap' Newfoundland humour, a deep sense of Jazz history, and a deeper love for it, there hardly seems a better vocalist to undertake a leap into the unknown on: *You'll Never Know*. That is, of course, only in a manner of speaking.

No leap of faith taken by Heather Bambrick is ever going to go wrong. Not even if it's without a net. Bambrick is blessed with perfect pitch, something that enables her to land every note in her spectacular range with dazzling facility and balletic grace. The memorable rendition of "Never Never Land" is just one of the songs on which Heather Bambrick performs – her elegant simplicity notwithstanding – with warm ambience and ineffably beautiful texture. Of course it always helps to have your voice reflected off a tapestry created by the flugelhorn of Guido Basso. Nevertheless, to have the music sound as if falls somewhere between a song and a symphonic aria, it takes nothing less than Heather Bambrick. Still, it's not every day that one gets this lucky.

Revisiting well-worn songs has its pitfalls, not the least one that can trap even the canniest musician in a rut not necessarily one of his or her own making. Songs – especially standards have a knack of trapping a performer in a quicksand of sentimentality. Some seek to wallow in it, others to take a rather risqué way out by blending atonality with disturbing colours. You have to be sublimely confident of your art to make but the almost infinitesimal adjustments of enunciation and inflection to ring in the changes and leave the glorious singularity of the song unblemished. Heather Bambrick rocks it with "Get Happy" and pours on the beauty and romance of "You'll Never Know".

You will be forgiven if you mistake "I Don't Mind a Bit" comes from the pen of Bob Dorough, which it is not, of course. With wit and whimsy that is characteristic of Heather Bambrick's on-air schtick she sets the album abuzz with that song before slowing things down for another glacial performance with Guido Basso on "You'll Never Know". Lest it appear that there is no one else accompanying Bambrick on this album, let it be said that no praise is high enough for guitarist Rob Piltch (think velvet-lined melodicism), Mark Kieswetter (piano master and production mastermind), bassist Ross McIntyre (think vibrant tonal sculptor), David DiRenzo (lyrical urgency), Chase Sanborn (dramatic and poetic) and John Johnson (horn of plenty).

The album ends with the elementally sad traditional song from Canada's Maritime province of Newfoundland, which commemorates *The Bait Skiff Tragedy of 1852*. You could not fault the bleeding heart that Bambrick pours into it as she raises the ghosts of the dead. Nor could you find fault elsewhere on *You'll Never Know*. Production values on are the very epitomé of perfection. This includes the instrumental engineering by John "Beetle" Bailey, Taylor Kernohan, Julian Decorte, and Jono Grant who captures every vocal nuance. But ultimately it's all about Heather Bambrick whose seamless musical fabric engages the ear as if it were charting events in a parallel universe.

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