

Vanessa Rubin: Nothing Less Than the Best!

Written by: Alie Clark

Vanessa Rubin is an accomplished jazz vocalist and composer who rose to stardom under the tutelage of New York jazz greats Barry Harris and Frank Foster. Her career began when she received high praise for her performance of the famous ballad "God Bless the Child" in a pageant in her hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. Rubin maintains to this day that that experience is the reason she decided to follow her heart and pursue a career in music.

Rubin's singing style is smooth as silk, with just enough sass and edge to leave you wanting more. She displays an effortless ability to present a melody as though it is the first time it has been sung, and blends beautifully with her fellow musicians on the bandstand.

Throughout her career Rubin has shared the stage with great musicians such as Etta Jones, Cedar Walton, Steve Turre, and Kenny Barron. Recently she has done international tours with Herbie Hancock, the Woody Herman Orchestra, and the Jazz Crusaders. The fact that so many musicians hold her in high esteem speaks to her musical ability, dedication, and love of her craft.

Rubin has recorded eight albums, starting with her 1992 debut, *Soul Eyes*. Her records feature top musicians such as Etta Jones and Lewis Nash, and showcase her powerful voice and her ability to share the emotional core of a song. Her 2001 album, *Girl Talk*, is one of her best releases to date, featuring an exceptional rendition of the ballad "Whatever Happens." Rubin's swingin' and lighthearted tone on the more upbeat tunes makes the album sophisticated, accessible and timeless.

Rubin has just recorded a new album in collaboration with saxophonist Don Braden. *Full Circle*, a tribute to her life in jazz and her hometown Cleveland, is set to be released this year and is her first record featuring an organ quartet.

Rubin is well known in the jazz community for being multi-faceted. In addition to being a talented vocalist, she is a composer-arranger, lyricist and actress. Her portrayal of jazz icon Billie Holiday in the musical *Yesterdays: An Evening with Billie Holiday* impressed the critics and earned her a nomination for the Kevin Kline Award for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Musical. Her performance demonstrated her versatility, but also paid tribute to the great musicians who paved the way for future artists.

In October, Vanessa Rubin brings *Yesterdays: An Evening with Billie Holiday* to the Izzy Asper Jazz Performances stage. Winnipeg audiences are in for a rare treat—an evening of powerful singing and heart-breaking musical storytelling, a tribute to the singer who has been Rubin's inspiration from the start.

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