

Jane Monheit

Jane Monheit falls in love every time she sings. You hear it, with style and soul, in the luscious curves of her amazing voice. The way she teases new angles out of beautifully chiseled tunes. The way she coaxes a bit more sass, an extra degree of heat from a debonair lyric. And who wouldn't fall in love with songs like "Embraceable You," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Taking a Chance on Love" and "In the Still of the Night"? For Monheit, these songs form a virtual soundtrack of her life, one she began hearing as a little girl, swept up in the magic of the classic MGM movie musicals.

"This music has been a part of my life since I was very young," Monheit says. "Jazz was a huge part of that, especially the standards sung by the great vocalists. My family is incredibly musical, and I was surrounded by music from the time I was a baby. I loved watching old movies, which is where I heard these songs. So while I was discovering them in the movies I saw, I was also hearing them sung by singers like Ella Fitzgerald in the records my parents would play."

Sultry and beautiful, Jane is already a jazz diva who ranks with the very best, a star in the ascendant who has made it at the age of 26. From her emergence at the tender age of 20 at the 1998 Thelonious Monk Competition to the international acclaim that greeted her third solo album *In The Sun*, she has astonished listeners with the depth and range of her irresistible gifts: a deluxe voice and a passionate spirit spiked with an uncanny jazz sense that reinvents the great standards of American popular music.

Monheit wowed the jury of the 1998 Monk competition, in which she took second prize to the late Teri Thornton, who was making a dramatic career comeback in the competition, shortly before her death. Monheit's performance led to her immediately being signed for her first solo recording *Never Never Land*, which placed her in the company of jazz veterans such as pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Ron Carter and saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman. The album remained on the Billboard Jazz Chart for over a year, and the Jazz Journalists Association voted it Best Recording Debut. Her second album *Come Dream With Me* debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Jazz Chart in May 2001. Her third solo album *In The Sun* was released late last year.

"I think I always knew I wanted to be a jazz singer," Monheit says. "For a long time, I was guided by my love for musical theater - I performed a lot of theater when I was growing up - but jazz had always been one of my passions. These songs are part of that. When I went to Manhattan School of Music and decided to study jazz, it was the strength of these songs that convinced me. It's impossible to be bored by them. They're the building blocks of popular music today."

A native of Long Island who now calls Manhattan her home, Monheit numbers among her musical family an aunt and a grandmother who were both professional singers, a brother who plays rock guitar, a father who plays bluegrass banjo, and a mother who performed in musical theater. She studied clarinet and music theory, and took the leads in theatrical productions in high school. She got her start performing on the South Shore of Long Island, and she began formal vocal training at the age of 17 at New York's Manhattan School of Music with Peter Eldridge, a founding member of the vocal group New York Voices.

About her influences, Monheit quickly says, "First and foremost, Ella Fitzgerald. When I was a child, I was obsessed with her records, singing along with them, trying to match every note. But I love all the greats-including Carmen McRae, Sinatra, Mel Tormé-and I have a special feeling for Irene Kral. The

great vocal groups-Take Six, New York Voices-have been a big inspiration to me, and I have a lot of influences from outside of jazz such as Barbara Cook, and singer/songwriters like Bonnie Raitt and Joni Mitchell."