

## Melissa Walker

A new type of jazz singer has emerged at the dawn of the 21st century and 3rd millennium. This artist has the ability to consolidate the many aspects of jazz singing—blues sensibility, lyric interpretation, rhythmic phrasing and improvisation—into an artistic expression that is both timely and timeless...

Melissa Walker is that artist.

Melissa's third recording for Enja Records, *I Saw the Sky* has consistently received 5-stars across the globe and garnered a 2002 Canadian Juno Award nomination for Best Jazz Vocal Album of the Year. A beautiful beguiling collection of standards and original compositions that capture an intimacy which has become her hallmark.

This swinging piano-trio themed release, features Kenny Barron, Makoto Ozone and Shedrick Mitchell, bassist Kiyoshi Kitagawa and producer/drummer, Clarence Penn, with a special guest appearance by Stefon Harris on vibes and marimba and a lush string quartet. *I Saw the Sky* is a gorgeous display of Melissa's extraordinary talents as a singer and lyricist, coupled with her exquisite selections and captivating arrangements. Choreographer, dancer and producer, Debbie Allen, recently noted after filming Melissa for one of her television programs, "The world will be a better place when it discovers Melissa Walker."

With her new recording and full touring schedule—discovering Melissa Walker has indeed become easier!

July 2001 Melissa performed as a guest of bassist, Ray Brown, on his 75th Birthday Celebration European Festival Tour. Melissa is no stranger to Europe. She has performed consistently with her trio for the last four years at many noted jazz festivals including Berlin, Montreux and the North Sea. Internationally acclaimed performances also include concerts in Europe, Canada, South America, the Middle-East, Africa. Touring continued in the fall with Melissa's first live performance in Japan where she was a guest of revered alto saxophonist, Sadao Watanabe.

Blessed with an artistic imagination pointed toward the future and a reverence for the rich jazz tradition, Melissa's gifts are also heard on her second Enja Records released in 1999, *Moment of Truth*—inspired by the work of John Coltrane and Betty Carter.

*May I Feel*—her 1997 debut release on Enja Records, produced by Gary Bartz, contains a wonderful mix of standards which have since become signature songs including, "Miss Otis Regrets" and "I'm a Fool to Want You." This release, mixed with strong original compositions, reached number seven on the Gavin Jazz Chart, and received "Honorable Mention" in the 1998 Indie Awards.

Melissa has performed with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra conducted by Wynton Marsalis, as part of the Duke Ellington Centennial Celebration. Melissa tours regularly in the United States including festivals and such noted New York venues as the Jazz Standard and Birdland. Melissa's television appearances include CBS, NBC, Reuters, Pure Oxygen, WE TV, BET. She has been featured in magazines ranging from *Vogue*, *US*, *Billboard*, *Savoy*, *JazzIs*, *Jazz Times* and *Down Beat*.

Melissa's anchored, yet wide-open musicianship mirrors her bicultural heritage. She was born and raised

in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada to biracial American parents. Her father played professional football and later both her parents obtained doctorate degrees. It was through her parents where the seeds of life with its many choices were first planted. Melissa discusses her music—

“I think of songs as stories. They are the vehicle by which we all become friends, for songs are stories that we all know. Standards represent our universal commonness in love, joy, loss, longing, peace, regret and misfortune. Other stories reflect our spiritual life. Still others —are celebrations of life.”

Melissa graduated from Brown University where her interest in jazz singing bloomed. Later, Melissa abandoned plans to attend law school. In 1993, she self-produced her debut recording, *Little Wishes* and shortly thereafter moved to the New York area and signed with Enja Records.

With a future full of promise, renowned critic Ira Gitler declared, "Make no mistake. Melissa Walker is an intelligent, talented singer with all the attributes necessary to pick up the mantle of past greats and drape it around her shoulders."